

Vestal Virgin who claimed Mars impregnated her.

- **Octavian (Caesar Augustus):** son of Apollo as snake.

A mistranslation of the Hebrew “young maiden” into the Greek “virgin” was seen as an oracle: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a *virgin* shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” —Isaiah 7:14 (KJV).

Jesus as Pre-Existing Divinity: *God the Son*

The Gospel of John (~100 CE) introduces Jesus as the divine *Logos* of creation, the eternal Word.

By the fourth century this understanding becomes orthodox through the Council of Nicaea, and then later is more carefully defined at the Council of Chalcedon.

Jesus vs. Rome

In a stone inscription from 9 BCE divine Providence was praised for “sending [Caesar Augustus] as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war...**the beginning of the gospel** for the world that came by reason of him.”

The Gospel of Mark starts with “**The beginning of the gospel** of Jesus the Anointed.” Both Jesus and the Emperor are described as: Prince of Peace, Savior, God with Us, etc.

Resources:

- *How Jesus Became God* by Bart Ehman
- *Born of a Woman* by John Shelby Spong
- “The Eagle and the Dove: Roman Imperial Sonship and the Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1.9-11)” by Michael Peppard

Doctrine

Christian Principles & Teachings

Session 2: Incarnation and Divine Sonship

John Elliott Lein — March 24, 2018

Doctrine: a collection of teachings in a system of belief. True doctrine heals; it is a “doctor for our souls.”

Incarnations

Incarnation (n): 1) a person who embodies in the flesh a deity, spirit, or abstract quality (*embodiment, personification, exemplification, type, epitome; manifestation, bodily form, representation in the flesh; avatar*); 2) one of a series of lifetimes (*reincarnation*) that a person spends on earth.

Son of God in the Ancient World

The title *son of god* was widely used in both Jewish and Roman circles in the first century, meaning a variety of things:

1. **God’s anointed one:** human representative of a god on the earth doing appointed work.
2. **Raised divine on death:** actual divine nature conferred on human at death.
3. **Adopted sonship:** adopted as divine during life.
4. **Born divine:** product of impregnation by a god with a human woman.
5. **A pre-existing divinity incarnated:** more common in Hindu circles, similar to *avatar*.

A Spectrum of Divinity in the Ancient World

Romans and other ancient peoples saw divinity as a pyramid structure:

1. **The Source of All:** the supreme, all-powerful deity.
2. **The Great Gods:** Zeus, Apollo, and others.
3. **Local gods:** of cities, rivers, and mountains.
4. **Daimones:** a multitude of muses and guides.
5. **Divine humans:** rare, but truly elevated humans.
6. **The rest of humanity:** with their own hierarchy.

Jews had become firm monotheists by the first century, but still saw the divine as a spectrum rather than dichotomy:

1. **YHWH:** the only true God.
2. **The Angel of the Lord** (Gen 16, 18; Ex 3); **the Son of Man** (Dan 7; 1 Enoch); **Wisdom/Logos** (Prv 8; *Philo*).
3. **The Great Angels:** Michael, Gabriel, Raphael.
4. **Angels, cherubim, seraphim, and demons.** Ps 82; Job 1 (humans can become angels: *Baruch*; 1 *Enoch*; Moses).
5. **Sons of gods:** angels beget sons with human women (Gen 6, 1 Enoch's "Book of the Watchers")
6. **son of God:** Humans could be appointed as the son of God (2 Sam 7; Ps 34, 89, 110; Is 9, Ex 4).
7. **Humanity:** in our own hierarchies.

Jesus as the Son of God

Christians have seen Jesus as divine since the first few decades after his death (see the early hymn in the *Epistle to the Philippians*), but there are multiple accounts of what this means embedded within our Scriptures.

Jesus as son of God

Jesus was the appointed/anointed one (Hebrew: *Mesiah*; Greek: *Christos*) of God for his time, just as David was

for his time. Jesus's own preferred title for himself throughout the Gospels was *son of man* ("the Human One"). This seems to be the understanding of his followers in life.

Jesus raised Divine

Actual divine nature was conferred upon Jesus as he was raised by God from the dead (~55 CE):

"...concerning his Son—born from David's seed according to the flesh, **marked out by resurrection of the dead as God's Son** in power according to a spirit of holiness..."—Romans 1:3-4 (DBH)

Jesus adopted as Divine: *Adoptionism*

Jesus was adopted as God's true Son during his lifetime, likely during John's baptism (~70 CE):

"And in those days it happened that Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee, came and was baptized in the Jordan by John. And, immediately rising up out of the water, he saw the heavens being rent apart and the Spirit descending to him as a dove; and a voice out of the heavens: "**You are my Son, the beloved, in you I have delighted.**"—Mark 1:9-11 (DBH)

Octavian, known as Caesar Augustus, was the adopted heir to the Roman Empire and the first emperor known as divine during his lifetime. Adoption was a potent idea.

Jesus born Divine

By the time of the second wave of Gospels (Matthew and Luke, ~80 CE) Jesus was understood in some way as a unique creation, divine from the moment of conception in Mary's womb.

Roman mythology was full of divine offspring with human women:

- **Alexander the Great:** fathered by Zeus as snake.
- **Hercules:** fathered by disguised Jupiter.
- **Romulus** (founder of Rome): his mother was a