

# Luke-Acts and John

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HIST 328 Lecture 9

# Diversity in Gospels and Acts

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- Jesus groups in last ~30 years of 1st C
  - Some similar questions
  - Some development, reinterpretation
- Main areas of disagreement
  - Jesus for Jews, Gentiles, or both?
    - Matthew vs. Mark, Luke/Acts, John
  - Future vs. realized eschatology?
    - Matthew, Mark vs. Luke/Acts
    - Who best represents Paul's views?
  - Cosmic Christ vs. God's adopted son?
    - John vs. Luke/Acts

# Acts: reinterpretation of Paul

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- Paul
  - Future eschatology
  - Separate missions to Jews and Gentiles
  - Law-free Gospel for Gentiles
- Acts
  - Realized eschatology (see esp. Pentecost)
  - Missions to Jews and Gentiles closely linked
  - Most Jews ultimately reject Jesus (and Paul)
- Why need to revise story?
  - Later author reflecting his own time (ca. 80-100 CE)
  - Now clear (to some) the end wasn't coming

# Jesus as Christ/Messiah

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- Terminology
  - Hebrew messiah = Greek christos = “anointed”
- Jewish messiah
  - Human savior chosen by God
  - Political or cosmic or both
  - Modelled on Moses, David (and others)
- Jewish wisdom theology
  - Wisdom as God’s agent in creation and the world

# Narrative arc of Acts

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- Christianity begins among Jews
- Most Jews reject message
- Christianity becomes a Gentile religion
  - Key intermediate term: “Godfearers”
  - Context: cities of eastern Mediterranean

# Review: Luke's infancy narrative

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- Annunciation to Mary (angel)
- Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem → manger
- Annunciation to shepherds (more angels)
- Jesus is circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day
- Point:
  - Jesus is Jewish, descended from David
  - BUT Jesus's birth has cosmic significance

# Comparison: Jesus's death

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- Mark
  - “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”
- Matthew
  - Same as Mark
- Luke
  - “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”

# Acts: the apostolic community

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- Pentecost
  - Tongues of flame
  - Setting: the Temple
  - Languages of Jews from diaspora
- Ananias and Sapphira
  - Radical “communism”
  - Rejection of worldly values, norms
- Realized eschatology



# Acts vs. Paul

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- Paul: Gal. 2.11-14
- Acts 15: “Jerusalem council”
- Compare:
  - Who does what?
  - When & in what order?
  - Where does the action take place?
  - What are the issues under dispute?
  - What is the outcome?

# Adoptionist Christologies

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- Jesus becomes “son of God” at his baptism
  - Mark 1.9 and parallels:
    - Descent of the spirit (dove)
    - “You are my son, the beloved...”
  - Cf. Codex Bezae (5th C manuscript), Luke 3.21:
    - “You are my son, the beloved; today I have begotten you.”
  - Luke 2.52: advancement/progression
    - “Jesus increased in... divine favor”
- Contrast John’s Jesus: pre-existent Word of God



# John and Jewish wisdom theology

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- Compare John 1 / Hebrew scripture
  - Genesis 1
  - Proverbs 8.22-30:
    - Hebrew hokhmah = Greek sophia = “wisdom”
    - Feminine noun (Hebrew, Greek)
  - See also Wis 7-8 (Greek Jewish text)
- John’s Jesus: God’s *logos* (word)
  - Cosmic being
  - Existed already before creation
  - God created through him
    - Greek logos = “word, reason, thought”
    - Masculine noun

# Word and wisdom in creation

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- Genesis 1
  - God creates the world through speech
- Proverbs 8.22-30
  - Wisdom as the divine workman in creation
- Wisdom of Solomon 7. -8.1
  - Wisdom as the “power of God”

# Genesis 1.1-10

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- “Beginning” (ba-reshit in Hebrew): either time or place
  - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- Pre-existent matter is chaotic (tohu va-bohu)
  - The earth was without form and void
- Components of pre-existent matter: earth (ha-aretz) and deep/water (tehom/mayim)
  - and darkness was upon the face of the deep
- Who/what is the “spirit of God” (ruach elohim, feminine noun)?
  - and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

# Genesis 1.1-10 continued

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- God creates by speaking (through his word)
  - And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
- Creation is good; ordering/separation as mode of creation
  - And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
- Naming of creation: role of speech again
  - God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
- Days of creation: before or in time?
  - And there was evening and there was morning, one day.



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# Proverbs 8.22-30

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- Wisdom (Hokhmah, fem.) speaks:
  - “YHWH created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of old.  
Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth...  
When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above...  
then I was beside him, like a master workman...”

# Wisdom of Solomon 7.25-8.1

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- Solomon describes Wisdom (Sophia):
  - ...She is a breath of the power of God,  
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty...  
...She is a reflection of eternal light,  
a spotless mirror of the working of God,  
and an image of his goodness.  
Though she is but one, she can do all things,  
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;  
...She is more beautiful than the sun,  
and excels every constellation of the stars.  
She reaches... from one end of the earth to the other,  
and she orders all things well.



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# John's Prologue: Christ as Word

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- John 1.1-5: word = *logos* (masculine noun)
  - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God;  
all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.  
In him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- Life = *zoē*, feminine noun