



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

KNOWING JESUS

Jesus and the Names of God

How the Names, Titles, and Works of God Help Us See Jesus More Clearly

The short answer

Jesus does not merely teach people about God. Scripture presents Him as the eternal Son who perfectly reveals the Father and shares in the identity, works, authority, glory, and honor of the one true God. Throughout the Old Testament, God reveals Himself as the LORD, Shepherd, Savior, King, Judge, Creator, Rock, Light, and the faithful One who loves His people. Then the New Testament repeatedly uses this same biblical language for Jesus. Jesus says, “I am.” Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is King. Jesus is Judge. Everything was created through Him. Jesus is the Light of the world. He shares the Father's glory. And New Testament writers sometimes take Old Testament passages that speak about the LORD and apply them directly to Jesus. This does not mean Jesus is the Father. Scripture distinguishes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit while revealing one God. These connections help readers understand one of the New Testament's central claims: Jesus Christ is not merely a prophet who points toward God. He is the eternal Son who makes the invisible God known.

KEY VERSE

“No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.”

John 1:18, CSB

Opening Welcome and Purpose

One of the most remarkable ways to study Jesus is to begin in the Old Testament. Long before His birth in Bethlehem, Scripture had already revealed who God is. God called Himself the LORD. He revealed Himself to Moses as “I AM.” He described Himself as Israel’s Shepherd. He declared Himself the only Savior. He was Israel’s King. He was the Creator. He was the righteous Judge. He was the Rock of His people. He was their Light. He portrayed His covenant relationship with His people using the picture of a faithful husband and bridegroom. Then Jesus came. And again and again, the New Testament uses extraordinary language for Him. Jesus says, “I am.” Jesus is called Shepherd. Jesus is proclaimed Savior. Jesus is King. Jesus judges humanity. Jesus is connected with creation. Jesus is the Bridegroom. Jesus is the Light. Jesus shares God’s glory. And New Testament writers sometimes quote Old Testament passages about the LORD and apply them directly to Jesus. These connections are not accidental. They are part of the Bible’s unfolding revelation of who Jesus is. The purpose of this study is not to suggest that every Old Testament name for God should automatically become a title for Jesus. Scripture must determine the connection. Instead, the goal is to examine places where the biblical writers themselves connect Jesus with the names, titles, works, authority, and identity of the God revealed in the Old Testament. This study was not created to replace the Bible. Its purpose is to help readers love and understand God’s Word. Every section is intended to send readers back into Scripture with greater confidence, deeper understanding, and a clearer picture of Jesus Christ. If the study leads to more time reading the Bible than reading these pages, it has accomplished its purpose.

Opening memory anchor

The names of God do more than tell us what God is called. They reveal who He is. And when Scripture connects God’s names, works, authority, and glory with Jesus, it helps reveal who Jesus truly is.

PART ONE · BEGINNER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Question Behind the Names

Christians say that Jesus is God. But where does the Bible actually teach this? There is no single answer because Scripture reveals Jesus’ identity in several ways. Some passages directly call Jesus God. Others show Him doing things the Old Testament identifies with God. Jesus forgives sins. He receives worship. He gives eternal life. He has authority over creation. He will judge humanity. He existed before His human birth. He shares the Father’s glory. Another important line of evidence appears when the New Testament uses Old Testament language about God and connects it with Jesus. To understand those connections, begin with something simple: God’s names matter.

01 WHY DO THE NAMES OF GOD MATTER?

In Scripture, a name can communicate more than identification. Names may reveal character, authority, reputation, relationship, or calling. God’s names are especially important because God sometimes reveals them Himself. Consider Exodus 3. Moses asks God what he should say when Israel asks the name of the God who sent him. God replies: “I AM WHO I AM.” Then God tells Moses: “Say this to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” Exodus 3:14, CSB The passage continues: “Say this to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever.” Exodus 3:15, CSB The word LORD in many English Bibles represents God’s personal Hebrew name, commonly written as YHWH. Throughout the Old Testament, this name identifies the God who creates, rescues, judges, forgives, shepherds, rules, and remains faithful to His people. That makes what happens in the New Testament remarkable. The biblical writers repeatedly describe Jesus using language the Old Testament associates with this God.

Reflection

When reading a familiar title for Jesus—such as Shepherd, Savior, or King—have you ever looked for where that title appears earlier in Scripture?

Memory Anchor

Begin with what the Old Testament says about God. Then notice what the New Testament says about Jesus.

02 A SIMPLE WAY TO STUDY THESE CONNECTIONS

There is an easy method that can help readers study this subject without forcing connections the Bible does not make. Use three questions.

Old Testament

What does the Old Testament passage say about God?

New Testament

Where does the New Testament use similar language about Jesus?

Connection

How strong is the connection? It may be:

Explicit

The New Testament directly quotes an Old Testament passage and applies it to Jesus.

Strongly Implied

The wording, role, or surrounding context makes the connection especially strong.

Possible Parallel

The passages sound similar, but Scripture does not directly tell readers to identify them. This final question is important. Not every shared word means two passages are teaching exactly the same thing. For example, God may be called a shepherd, and an ordinary human leader may also be called a shepherd. The word itself does not prove the two are identical. Context matters. This method helps readers remain excited about biblical connections while still allowing Scripture to determine how certain a connection should be.

Memory Anchor

Notice the connection. Then ask how clearly Scripture actually makes it.

03 JESUS AND “I AM”

One of the most famous passages about God’s name appears in Exodus 3. God tells Moses: “I AM WHO I AM.” Centuries later, Jesus repeatedly uses “I am” language in the Gospel of John. Some sayings include descriptions: “I am the bread of life.” John 6:35 “I am the light of the world.” John 8:12 “I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11 “I am the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25 “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6 “I am the true vine.” John 15:1 But John 8 contains an especially striking statement. Jesus is discussing Abraham with His opponents. They question Him because Abraham had lived centuries earlier. Jesus responds: “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” John 8:58, CSB The reaction is immediate: “So they picked up stones to throw at him.” John 8:59, CSB At the very least, Jesus claims existence before Abraham. But John has already prepared readers to understand Jesus as far more than an unusually ancient person. The Gospel begins: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was

God.” John 1:1, CSB John later describes Jesus sharing glory with the Father before the world existed. The wording of John 8:58 therefore fits John’s larger presentation of Jesus as the eternal Son. Many Christians also understand Jesus’ “I am” wording as intentionally echoing the divine-name language found in Exodus and Isaiah. The deeper linguistic questions are explored in Part Two. For a beginning reader, the central truth is clear: Jesus existed before Abraham. Jesus existed before Bethlehem. Jesus existed before creation.

Jesus Connection

Jesus did not begin to exist when He was born in Bethlehem. The eternal Son entered human history.

Memory Anchor

Bethlehem was the beginning of Jesus’ earthly human life—not the beginning of the Son.

04 JESUS AND THE LORD

One of the clearest connections appears when New Testament writers quote the Old Testament. Consider Isaiah 40:3: “A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.” Isaiah 40:3, CSB Now read Mark: “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!” Mark 1:2–3, CSB Who arrives after John the Baptist prepares the way? Jesus. Isaiah speaks about preparing the way for the LORD. Mark uses that Scripture as he introduces Jesus. That connection deserves attention. Paul provides another important example. Joel 2:32 says: “Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” Paul quotes it: “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13, CSB The surrounding verses speak about confessing: “Jesus is Lord” and believing that God raised Him from the dead. Romans 10:9 Paul therefore connects Jesus with the saving “Lord” language of Joel. The earliest Christians did not simply honor Jesus as an important teacher. They spoke about Him using language deeply rooted in Israel’s Scriptures and in the identity and saving work of Israel’s God.

Careful Distinction

The English word “Lord” can be used in different ways. It does not automatically mean the divine name YHWH every time it appears. Context matters. The strongest examples occur when the New Testament takes an Old Testament passage about YHWH and applies it to Jesus.

Reflection

What does it suggest about Jesus when Old Testament passages about the LORD are used to describe Him?

05 JESUS THE SHEPHERD

The shepherd image is one of Scripture’s most beloved pictures of God. David writes: “The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need.” Psalm 23:1, CSB Isaiah describes God: “He protects his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms.” Isaiah 40:11, CSB Ezekiel 34 gives an even fuller picture. Israel’s leaders have failed as shepherds. God declares: “I myself will search for my flock and look for them.” Ezekiel 34:11, CSB Later God promises: “I will establish over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will shepherd them.” Ezekiel 34:23, CSB God Himself will care for His sheep. And a promised ruler from David’s line will shepherd them. Then Jesus says: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11, CSB Jesus fulfills the promised role of the shepherd from David’s line. But He also does what God promised to do: seek, gather, protect, know, and save His sheep. Then the Good Shepherd does something astonishing. He gives His life for them.



Gospel Connection

Psalm 23 says the LORD is Shepherd. Ezekiel says God will care for His scattered sheep. Jesus says: "I am the good shepherd." And the Good Shepherd saves His sheep by laying down His life.

Memory Anchor

The Shepherd who seeks the sheep is also the Savior who dies for them.

06 JESUS THE SAVIOR

God declares through Isaiah: "I—I am the LORD. Besides me, there is no Savior." Isaiah 43:11, CSB Again: "There is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior; there is no one except me." Isaiah 45:21, CSB Salvation ultimately belongs to God. Yet the angel announces Jesus' birth: "Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11, CSB Peter later says: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12, CSB Paul speaks of: "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13, CSB The New Testament does not present Jesus as a second savior competing with God. God saves through His Son. The Father sends. The Son gives His life. The Holy Spirit gives life and brings people into the saving work Christ accomplished. Salvation belongs to the one God. And salvation comes through Jesus.

Reflection

If Scripture says God is Savior, what does the New Testament's repeated presentation of Jesus as Savior tell us about Him?

Memory Anchor

God saves. And God's salvation comes to us through Jesus Christ.

07 JESUS THE KING

The Old Testament repeatedly describes God as King. Psalm 47 says: "God is King of the whole earth." Psalm 47:7, CSB Isaiah says: "For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King. He will save us." Isaiah 33:22, CSB Israel also waited for a promised king from David's family. God promised David: "Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever." 2 Samuel 7:16, CSB These two themes come together in Jesus. The angel Gabriel tells Mary: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end." Luke 1:32–33, CSB Jesus is the promised King from David's line. But His rule reaches much farther than one nation. Revelation calls Him: "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:16, CSB Every earthly ruler is temporary. Jesus' kingdom is not.

Memory Anchor

Jesus does not merely belong to the kingdom. Jesus is the King.

08 JESUS AND CREATION

The Bible begins: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1, CSB Isaiah records God saying: "I am the LORD, who made everything." Isaiah 44:24, CSB Now compare the New Testament. John writes about the Word: "All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created." John 1:3, CSB Paul says of Christ: "For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible." Colossians 1:16, CSB Hebrews says of the Son: "In the beginning, Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands." Hebrews 1:10, CSB That final statement comes from Psalm 102, where the words describe the LORD. Hebrews applies them to the Son. The point is simple but enormous. Jesus is not presented as one of the things God created.

Scripture presents Him as the One through whom creation came into existence. This places Jesus in a category completely different from angels, rulers, prophets, or every other created being.

Careful Distinction

The Bible also speaks about the Father and the Holy Spirit in relation to creation. Christians do not believe three gods worked together to create the universe. Creation is the work of the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Reflection

How should recognizing Jesus as the One through whom all things were created affect the way His authority is understood?

09 JESUS THE ROCK

The Old Testament frequently calls God the Rock. Moses declares: “The Rock—his work is perfect; all his ways are just.” Deuteronomy 32:4, CSB David says: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.” Psalm 18:2, CSB Paul later describes Israel’s wilderness experience: “They drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4, CSB Paul is not saying that Jesus was literally a moving stone traveling through the wilderness. He is reading Israel’s wilderness story in light of Christ and identifying Christ as the true divine source sustaining God’s people. Jesus also describes the person who hears and obeys His words as someone building a house on rock. Matthew 7:24–25 The safest foundation for life is not: human strength, money, reputation, political power, other people, or changing circumstances. Christ remains when everything else moves.

Memory Anchor

Everything else moves. Christ remains.

10 JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM

The Old Testament sometimes uses marriage imagery for God’s relationship with His people. Isaiah says: “For your husband is your Maker— his name is the LORD of Armies.” Isaiah 54:5, CSB And: “As a groom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you.” Isaiah 62:5, CSB That background makes Jesus’ words particularly meaningful. When questioned about fasting, Jesus describes Himself as the bridegroom. Mark 2:19–20 John the Baptist also says of Jesus: “He who has the bride is the groom.” John 3:29, CSB The imagery reaches a climax in Revelation. God’s people are pictured as a bride prepared for the Lamb. Revelation 19:7–9; 21:2, 9 The picture communicates: covenant love, faithfulness, belonging, celebration, and lasting relationship.

Caution

Marriage imagery in Scripture should be interpreted according to what the biblical writers are communicating. It should not be turned into speculative or romantic meanings Scripture does not teach.

Reflection

What does the Bridegroom picture reveal about Christ’s faithfulness toward His people?

11 JESUS THE JUDGE

Abraham asks: “Won’t the Judge of the whole earth do what is just?” Genesis 18:25, CSB The Old Testament repeatedly portrays God as righteous Judge. Psalm 96 says the LORD: “is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness.” Psalm 96:13, CSB Yet Jesus says: “The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son.” John 5:22, CSB Paul says God: “has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed.” Acts 17:31, CSB Jesus will return as Judge.

That brings both warning and hope. Evil will not continue forever. Injustice will not have the final word. Those who persist in rebellion against God will face righteous judgment. And the Judge can be trusted because He is perfectly just. But the Judge is also the Savior. The One before whom humanity will stand is the same Jesus who gave Himself for sinners.

Gospel Connection

The righteous Judge stretched out His hands on the cross to save the guilty.

Memory Anchor

Jesus is both righteous Judge and gracious Savior.

12 JESUS THE LIGHT

The Old Testament describes God as light. David says: “The LORD is my light and my salvation.” Psalm 27:1, CSB Isaiah looks forward to a day when: “The LORD will be your everlasting light.” Isaiah 60:19, CSB Then Jesus declares: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12, CSB John had already said of the Word: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” John 1:4, CSB Jesus exposes darkness. He reveals truth. He shows what God is like. He leads people out of spiritual blindness. He gives life. Following Jesus means leaving darkness and walking in His light.

Reflection

Where might Christ and His Word need to correct the way you currently see something?

13 JESUS AND THE GLORY OF GOD

God says through Isaiah: “I am the LORD. That is my name, and I will not give my glory to another.” Isaiah 42:8, CSB Yet Jesus prays: “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.” John 17:5, CSB Jesus speaks of sharing glory with the Father before creation. John says: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father.” John 1:14, CSB Hebrews describes the Son: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature.” Hebrews 1:3, CSB Jesus does not take glory away from God. The New Testament presents the Son as sharing the glory of God. Philippians 2 says every knee will bow and every tongue confess: “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:11, CSB Honoring the Son glorifies the Father.

Memory Anchor

The glory of Jesus does not compete with the glory of God. It reveals it.

14 DOES THIS MEAN JESUS IS THE FATHER?

No. This distinction is essential. The Bible teaches that there is one God. It also presents the Father as God. The Son as God. And the Holy Spirit as God. Yet they are not the same Person. At Jesus’ baptism: the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks from heaven. Matthew 3:16–17 Jesus prays to the Father. John 17 The Father sends the Son. John 3:16–17 Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. John 14–16 Christians eventually used the word Trinity to summarize these biblical truths. One God. Father. Son. Holy Spirit. Three distinct Persons who share the one divine being. The Trinity is difficult to understand completely because God is greater than human understanding. But the basic biblical distinction is straightforward: Jesus is God. Jesus is not the Father. The Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God. There are not three gods. There is one God. The deeper theological questions are explored in Part Two.

Memory Anchor

One God.

Three Persons. The Son is fully God without being the Father.

15 WHAT JESUS REVEALS ABOUT THE FATHER

The purpose of understanding Jesus' identity is not merely to win a theological argument. It is to know God. Philip once said: "Lord, show us the Father, and that's enough for us." Jesus replied: "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:8–9, CSB Jesus does not mean He is the Father. He means He perfectly reveals Him. Want to know what God's compassion looks like? Watch Jesus touch the leper. Want to understand God's holiness? Watch Jesus confront sin. Want to understand God's mercy? Watch Jesus forgive sinners. Want to understand God's heart toward the broken? Watch Jesus welcome them. Want to understand God's justice? Listen to Jesus warn about judgment. Want to understand God's love? Look at the cross. Paul writes: "He is the image of the invisible God." Colossians 1:15, CSB Jesus is not merely someone who tells humanity what God is like. He shows us.

Reflection

Which part of Jesus' life or character most clearly helps you understand the Father?

Memory Anchor

To see the character of God clearly, look at Jesus. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

01

BEGIN WITH THE TEXT

When you notice a connection between Jesus and an Old Testament description of God, open both passages. Read them in context. Ask: What did the Old Testament passage originally say? How does the New Testament use the language? Is the connection explicit, strong, or only possible?

02

READ THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH JESUS IN VIEW—WITHOUT FORCING HIM

INTO EVERY DETAIL

When Scripture calls God Shepherd, Savior, King, Rock, Judge, or Light, notice how those themes develop. But do not turn every shared image into a hidden code about Jesus. Allow the New Testament to teach you how to read these connections.

03

READ THE GOSPELS ASKING A BIGGER QUESTION

Do not ask only: "What did Jesus do?" Also ask: "What does this reveal about who Jesus is?" Notice: His authority. His words. His actions. His relationship with the Father. His power over creation. His authority to forgive. His claims about eternal life.

04

LET JESUS CORRECT FALSE PICTURES OF GOD

People can form ideas about God from: parents, church experiences, authority figures, culture, fear, pain, or imagination. Jesus gives the clearest picture. Look at Christ. Listen to Him. Watch how He treats: sinners, sufferers, hypocrites, outsiders, disciples, children, enemies, and the broken.

05

WORSHIP JESUS FOR WHO HE IS

Christian worship is not centered merely on what Jesus gives. It is centered on who He is. Creator. Shepherd. Savior. King. Lord. The eternal Son.

06

TRUST THE ONE WHO REVEALS GOD

If Jesus truly shares the identity, authority, and glory of God, then His words matter enormously. His promises can be trusted. His commands deserve obedience. His warnings deserve attention. His cross deserves gratitude. His resurrection gives hope. And His invitation deserves a response.

SCRIPTURE-GROUNDED PRAYER

Prayer

Father, Thank You for revealing Yourself through Your Word and for making Yourself known through Your Son. Give greater understanding of who Jesus truly is. Guard against reducing Him to merely a teacher, example, prophet, or religious figure. Help every reader see the glory Scripture reveals in Him—the eternal Son, Creator, Shepherd, Savior, King, and Lord. Where false ideas about You have taken root, correct them through Your Word. Where sin has created distance, lead to repentance. Where fear has weakened trust, reveal the faithfulness of Christ. Where pride has resisted His authority, produce humility. Where hearts have grown familiar with Jesus, restore wonder. Teach Your people to worship the Son in a way that glorifies the Father and to walk by the power of the Holy Spirit. May every name and title lead beyond information into deeper faith, worship, obedience, and love. In Jesus' name, Amen. REVIEW AND REFLECTION

Questions to consider

1. Why are the names and titles of God important for understanding Scripture? 2. What three questions can help evaluate a possible connection between an Old Testament passage and Jesus? 3. What is significant about Jesus' statement, "Before Abraham was, I am"? 4. How does Isaiah 40:3 help illuminate Mark 1:2–3? 5. Why is Romans 10:13 important when considering Jesus' identity? 6. How does Ezekiel 34 prepare readers for Jesus' claim to be the Good Shepherd? 7. Why is Jesus being called Savior significant in light of Isaiah 43:11? 8. What does the New Testament teach about Jesus' relationship to creation? 9. What does Scripture mean when it distinguishes the Father and Son while affirming that Jesus is God? 10. Which name or title connected with Jesus most deepens your understanding of Him? 11. How should recognizing who Jesus is affect everyday discipleship?

BEGINNER REVIEW

Complete the sentence:

Complete the sentence: The LORD is my _____. Psalm 23:1 Jesus says, "I am the good _____." John 10:11 Isaiah says there is no _____ besides the LORD. Isaiah 43:11 The angel announces that Jesus is a _____. Luke 2:11 John says all things were _____ through the Word. John 1:3 Revelation calls Jesus King of _____ and Lord of _____. Revelation 19:16 Jesus says the person who has seen Him has seen the _____. John 14:9

PART TWO · WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Intermediate

This section is optional

The Beginner Guide provides everything necessary to understand the central teaching of this study. This section examines the Hebrew and Greek background, important interpretive questions, several passages often debated in discussions about Jesus' deity, the development of early Christian Christology, and areas where Christian interpretation differs from Jewish, Islamic, and some modern critical readings.

16 THE DIVINE NAME YHWH

The personal divine name represented by the four Hebrew consonants YHWH is sometimes called the Tetragrammaton, meaning "four letters." Ancient Hebrew writing primarily recorded consonants. Because of Jewish reverence for the divine name, readers eventually avoided pronouncing YHWH aloud and often substituted Adonai, meaning "Lord." Many English translations therefore represent YHWH with: LORD in small capital letters. This matters when reading the New Testament because ancient Greek translations of the Old Testament commonly rendered YHWH with the Greek word *kyrios*, meaning "Lord." The New Testament also calls Jesus *kyrios*. The word itself can have ordinary meanings such as "sir," "master," or "lord." Therefore: Jesus is called *kyrios* does not by itself prove: Jesus is being directly identified with YHWH. Context must determine the meaning. The evidence becomes especially significant when a New Testament author takes an Old Testament passage referring specifically to YHWH and applies it to Jesus. Important examples include: Isaiah 40:3 → Mark 1:3 Joel 2:32 → Romans 10:13 Psalm 102:25–27 → Hebrews 1:10–12 Isaiah 45:23 → Philippians 2:10–11 These connections form an important part of the New Testament's presentation of Jesus.

17 PHILIPPIANS 2 AND ISAIAH 45

Isaiah records God declaring: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:22, CSB Then: "Every knee will bow to me, every tongue will swear allegiance." Isaiah 45:23, CSB Paul uses strikingly similar language about Jesus: "so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10–11, CSB Paul is not replacing the Father with Jesus. Nor is he presenting Jesus as another God alongside the Father. Instead, Jesus is included within language Isaiah uses for the universal acknowledgment of the one true God. And the confession of Jesus as Lord brings glory to God the Father. This is why Philippians 2 is one of the most important passages in discussions of early Christian belief about Jesus.

18 "HE EMPTIED HIMSELF" — WHAT DOES KENOSIS MEAN?

Just before the exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2:9–11 comes one of the New Testament's most discussed statements. Christ: "emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity." Philippians 2:7, CSB The Greek verb often translated "emptied" is *kenoō*. The theological discussion surrounding this verse is sometimes called *kenosis*. What did Jesus empty Himself of? The passage does not say that the Son stopped being God. Notice how Paul explains the emptying: "by assuming the form of a servant" and "taking on the likeness of humanity." The movement is therefore not presented as: Christ was God, then removed His deity, then became merely human. Instead, the eternal Son humbles Himself by taking the position of a servant and truly becoming human. He adds genuine humanity rather than ceasing to possess deity. Historic Christian teaching therefore confesses Jesus as fully God and fully human. He does not merely appear human. Nor does He temporarily stop being divine. Some theologians have proposed stronger forms of "kenotic theology," suggesting that the Son surrendered or set aside certain divine attributes during the incarnation. Other theologians argue that an essential divine attribute cannot simply stop belonging to God and therefore interpret Christ's earthly limitations through the genuine humanity He assumed and the way He willingly lived His incarnate mission. Faithful Christians have discussed precisely how Christ's divine and human natures relate to experiences such as: hunger, fatigue, growth in wisdom, limited human knowledge, suffering, and death. The safest conclusion is to remain close to what Scripture clearly states: The

eternal Son truly became human. He genuinely humbled Himself. He truly lived as a servant. He remained who He eternally is. And His humiliation led through the cross to exaltation.

19 HEBREWS 1 MAKES AN EXTRAORDINARY CONNECTION

Hebrews 1 is one of the richest chapters for understanding Jesus' identity. The writer says the Son: made the universe, is the radiance of God's glory, is the exact expression of God's nature, sustains all things, and sits at God's right hand. Then the writer quotes several Old Testament passages. Hebrews 1:10–12 quotes Psalm 102:25–27. In Psalm 102, the words are addressed to the LORD. Hebrews applies them to the Son: "In the beginning, Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands." This is stronger than merely saying: Jesus resembles the Creator. An Old Testament passage about the enduring Creator is applied to the Son. Hebrews simultaneously distinguishes the Son from the Father and uses divine Creator language for Him. This combination—personal distinction alongside shared divine identity—is fundamental to Trinitarian Christian theology.

20 JESUS AND THE "I AM" SAYINGS

John contains several sayings traditionally grouped into two categories.

Predicate "I Am" Sayings

Jesus identifies Himself with a description: "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the door." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I am the true vine." These sayings reveal dimensions of Jesus' identity and mission.

Absolute "I Am" Sayings

Other passages use ego eimi—"I am"—without an expressed description. Examples include: John 8:24 John 8:28 John 8:58 John 13:19 John 18:5–8 The expression ego eimi can be used ordinarily in Greek. Someone saying ego eimi does not automatically mean: "I am claiming to be YHWH." That would overstate the linguistic evidence. The argument depends on context. In John, Jesus: exists before Abraham, comes from heaven, shares glory with the Father before creation, gives eternal life, uses "I am" language in striking theological contexts, and is finally addressed by Thomas as: "My Lord and my God." Because of this larger pattern, many interpreters understand at least some of John's absolute "I am" statements as participating in Old Testament divine self-identification language, particularly passages in Exodus and Isaiah. Other scholars are more cautious and argue that the wording primarily expresses Jesus' preexistence or identity within John's own theological presentation rather than functioning as a direct quotation of Exodus 3:14. The safest argument does not depend on one phrase alone. John's Christology emerges from the cumulative presentation of Jesus throughout the Gospel.

Intermediate Memory Anchor

A word or phrase rarely carries an entire doctrine by itself. Biblical theology comes from words read within sentences, passages, books, and the whole storyline of Scripture.

21 JOHN 1:1 — "THE WORD WAS GOD"

John begins: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1, CSB The final clause has generated considerable discussion because the Greek text does not use the definite article before the word theos, "God," in that particular construction. Some groups, most notably Jehovah's Witnesses, therefore translate the phrase: "the Word was a god." But Greek does not use the definite article in exactly the same way English uses "the." The absence of an article does not automatically make a noun indefinite. Word order and grammar matter. In John 1:1, the construction distinguishes the Word from "God" whom the Word is "with," while describing what the Word is by nature. This allows John to maintain both truths: the Word is personally distinguishable from the Father, and the Word truly shares deity. The grammar should not be overstated as though one technical rule alone proves the entire doctrine of the

Trinity. But “the Word was a god” is not the most natural understanding of the Greek construction in context. John immediately continues by saying: “He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him.” John 1:2–3, CSB Later the Gospel describes the Son sharing glory with the Father before creation and culminates in Thomas addressing Jesus as: “My Lord and my God.” The interpretation of John 1:1 therefore belongs within John’s entire presentation of Jesus.

22 “MY LORD AND MY GOD” — JOHN 20:28

Near the end of John’s Gospel, Thomas encounters the risen Jesus. Thomas responds: “My Lord and my God!” John 20:28, CSB The most straightforward reading is that Thomas directly addresses Jesus. Jesus does not correct Thomas. Instead He says: “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” John 20:29, CSB Alternative interpretations have occasionally been proposed. Some have suggested Thomas is uttering an exclamation toward God rather than directly identifying Jesus as his Lord and God. Others have suggested that Thomas distinguishes between Jesus as “Lord” and the Father as “God.” Those readings face significant difficulties in the grammar and narrative setting because John explicitly introduces the statement as Thomas answering Jesus: “Thomas responded to him.” John 20:28 The confession also fits the literary movement of John’s Gospel. John 1:1: “The Word was God.” John 20:28: “My Lord and my God.” John 20:31: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.” John does not present theological information merely for curiosity. His goal is belief leading to life.

23 DOES “SON OF GOD” MEAN JESUS IS LESS THAN GOD?

Modern readers can misunderstand the title “Son of God.” Human sons come into existence after their fathers. Jesus is not God’s Son in that biological or chronological sense. Christian teaching does not say that God produced Jesus as a later divine being. John says: “In the beginning was the Word.” John 1:1 The Son already exists at the beginning. John 5 also reveals how extraordinary Jesus’ relationship to the Father appeared to His opponents. John explains that Jesus was: “calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.” John 5:18, CSB Biblical sonship communicates a unique relationship and identity rather than teaching that Jesus is a created offspring of God. Later Christian theology used language such as: “begotten, not made” to protect this distinction. The Son is not part of creation. He is eternally Son.

24 WHAT ABOUT PASSAGES WHERE JESUS APPEARS SUBORDINATE TO THE FATHER?

Several passages describe Jesus obeying, being sent by, praying to, or submitting to the Father. Jesus says: “The Father is greater than I.” John 14:28 He says He came to do the Father’s will. John 6:38 He prays to the Father. John 17 He says certain matters remain within the Father’s authority. Acts 1:7 These passages should not be ignored. Historic Christian theology has generally distinguished between two questions: WHO IS JESUS? and WHAT ROLE DID THE SON WILLINGLY TAKE IN GOD’S WORK OF REDEMPTION? Philippians 2 describes Christ humbling Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming human, and obeying to the point of death. The Son’s obedience does not require the conclusion that He is a lesser kind of being. Instead, Scripture presents the eternal Son willingly living in obedience to the Father within His incarnate mission. Christians have disagreed over some finer questions about how the eternal relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit should be described. Those debates should not be treated as though only one secondary theological model is faithful. Historic Trinitarian Christianity nevertheless holds two truths together: The Father and Son are personally distinct. The Son fully shares the divine nature.

25 DID THE EARLY CHURCH INVENT JESUS’ DEITY CENTURIES LATER?

A common claim says Christians originally regarded Jesus merely as a human teacher and that His deity was invented centuries later —often at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. That claim does not adequately account for the New Testament evidence. Long before Nicaea, New Testament writings use extraordinary language

for Jesus. Examples include: John 1:1 John 20:28 Romans 10:9–13 1 Corinthians 8:4–6 Philippians 2:5–11 Colossians 1:15–20 Titus 2:13 Hebrews 1 2 Peter 1:1 Some individual passages involve grammatical or interpretive discussion. But the larger pattern appears within Christianity’s earliest surviving sources. Nicaea did not gather to vote on whether an ordinary human being should suddenly become God. The controversy concerned how Christians should describe the relationship between the Father and Son while remaining faithful to Scripture and to Christian worship already centered on Christ. The council developed careful theological vocabulary. The conviction that Jesus held a unique divine status was much older.

26 WHAT DO SCHOLARS WHO DISAGREE SAY?

Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging that not every scholar interprets the New Testament’s Christology in the same way. Some critical scholars argue that beliefs about Jesus developed gradually. In versions of this view, Jesus may originally have been understood primarily as: a prophet, Messiah, exalted human agent, or specially appointed representative of God. More explicit statements about His preexistence or deity may then be understood as later theological development within the early church. From this perspective, a Gospel such as John—usually dated later than the earliest Pauline letters—may preserve a more developed Christology than some earlier Christian traditions. Some scholars therefore interpret statements such as: “Before Abraham was, I am” or “My Lord and my God” primarily as expressions of John’s theological understanding of Jesus rather than words that should automatically be assumed to reflect the earliest stage of Christian belief. Other scholars challenge this developmental model. They point to very early Christian material such as: 1 Corinthians 8:6, Philippians 2:6–11, Romans 10:9–13, and early worship and prayer directed toward Jesus. These texts suggest that remarkably high claims about Jesus appear very early—within writings that predate the Gospel of John. The question therefore is not simply: Does John present Jesus as divine? The stronger historical question is: How early did Christians begin placing Jesus within the worship, identity, works, and honor of Israel’s God? The evidence has generated substantial scholarly discussion. This study follows the historic Christian reading because the cumulative New Testament evidence—including early Pauline texts, Gospel material, Old Testament YHWH quotations, worship, creation language, saving authority, and explicit divine titles—best explains the full biblical pattern. That conclusion should still be reached by examining the evidence rather than pretending alternative readings do not exist.

27 ONE GOD, ONE LORD — 1 CORINTHIANS 8:6

One of the most important early passages is sometimes overlooked. Paul writes: “yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6, CSB Paul is writing within Jewish monotheism—the conviction that there is one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares: “Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” Paul does not respond to pagan polytheism by adding Jesus as a second deity. Instead, he speaks of: one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, while assigning creation itself to this relationship: all things are from the Father, all things are through Jesus Christ. Many scholars therefore understand Paul as including Jesus within the identity of the one God rather than introducing another god beside Him. Because 1 Corinthians predates the Gospel of John, this text is particularly important when evaluating claims that a high understanding of Jesus arose only very late.

28 WHAT ABOUT JUDAISM AND ISLAM?

This study presents the historic Christian interpretation of Jesus. That interpretation is not shared by every faith tradition.

Judaism

Judaism affirms the one God of Israel and receives the Hebrew Scriptures as sacred Scripture but does not accept the New Testament as authoritative Scripture. Jewish interpretation therefore does not accept Christian claims that passages about YHWH should be read as identifying Jesus with the God of Israel. Traditional Jewish belief also rejects the Christian doctrines of the incarnation and Trinity.

Islam

Islam honors Jesus—Isa—as Messiah and prophet and affirms His miraculous birth. But Islamic teaching explicitly rejects the Christian belief that Jesus is God or the divine Son in the Christian sense. Islam also rejects the Trinity as understood in historic Christianity. These disagreements are important because they show that the Christian reading is not simply the only imaginable interpretation of Old Testament language. Christianity reads Israel's Scriptures in light of what it accepts as God's further revelation in Jesus and the New Testament. The central question therefore becomes: Is the New Testament's testimony about Jesus trustworthy? If it is, Christians must allow its writers to show how Jesus fulfills and participates in the story, works, titles, and identity of Israel's God. This study does not attempt a full comparison among Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It simply acknowledges that the Christological reading presented here is a specifically Christian reading grounded in the Old and New Testaments together.

29 WHAT ABOUT "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD"?

Some Christians connect Old Testament appearances of "the angel of the LORD" with the preincarnate Christ. Certain passages are intriguing because the angel sometimes: speaks as God, bears divine authority, or is closely identified with God. Examples include: Genesis 16:7–13 Genesis 22:11–18 Exodus 3:2–6 Judges 6:11–24 Judges 13:2–23 Some Christian interpreters therefore understand these appearances as Christophanies—appearances of Christ before His incarnation. Other faithful interpreters understand the angel as a heavenly messenger who perfectly represents God and speaks with delegated divine authority. Scripture never explicitly says: "The angel of the LORD was the preincarnate Jesus." Therefore the connection should not be presented as settled fact. It is a possible theological interpretation, not an explicit biblical identification. This distinction demonstrates an important Bible-study principle: Interesting possibilities should never be stated with greater certainty than Scripture provides.

30 DOES EVERY NAME OF GOD APPLY DIRECTLY TO JESUS?

No. This is the central guardrail for the entire study. Scripture reveals many names and titles for God. Some describe the one divine nature and therefore appropriately relate to Father, Son, and Spirit. Others emphasize a particular Person or relationship. Still others arise within specific covenant settings or literary images. The responsible approach is not: "God has this name, therefore every occurrence must secretly refer to Jesus." Instead ask:

Old Testament

What does the passage actually say about God in its original context?

New Testament

Does the New Testament use this title, work, or passage for Jesus?

Connection

How clearly does Scripture establish the relationship? Is it: explicit, strongly implied, or merely a possible parallel? Additional questions may help: Does a New Testament writer quote the Old Testament passage about Jesus? Does Jesus claim the associated role or authority? Does the larger biblical context establish the connection? This protects readers from two opposite errors. The first is missing connections the biblical writers clearly make. The second is inventing connections the biblical writers never make. Faithful Bible study should do neither.

31 THE NAMES LEAD TO WORSHIP

Biblical theology should eventually become worship. Consider the cumulative picture. The LORD is Shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. The LORD is Savior. Jesus is Savior. God is King. Jesus is King of kings. God



created everything. Everything was created through the Son. The LORD is Judge. The Father entrusts judgment to the Son. God is Light. Jesus is the Light of the world. The LORD receives universal allegiance. Every knee bows to Jesus. God alone deserves worship. Jesus receives worship. The names and titles are not isolated trivia. Together they help reveal the identity of the One who: walked through Galilee, touched lepers, welcomed children, calmed storms, forgave sinners, carried the cross, died, rose from the grave, and ascended to the Father. The Jesus who says: “Come to me” is not merely offering religious advice. The Shepherd is calling. The Savior is calling. The Creator is calling. The King is calling. The Lord is calling. And He invites sinners to come.

Intermediate Memory Anchor

The strongest case for Jesus’ divine identity does not rest on one isolated verse, one Greek word, or one title. It rests on the cumulative witness of Scripture: Jesus shares God’s works, glory, authority, saving role, worship, names, and Old Testament LORD-language while remaining personally distinct from the Father. **THE MOST IMPORTANT INVITATION** Knowing the names of Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus. A person can understand Christian theology and remain separated from God. The gospel begins with God. God created people to know Him, love Him, worship Him, and live in fellowship with Him. But humanity has rebelled against God. Scripture calls this sin. Sin is not merely making mistakes. It is rejecting God’s rightful authority and falling short of His holiness. Everyone has sinned. Romans 3:23 Sin separates humanity from God. No amount of: religious activity, moral effort, family heritage, generosity, church attendance, biblical knowledge, or good intentions can erase guilt before a holy God. But God did not abandon sinners. The eternal Son entered the world. Jesus Christ lived the sinless life humanity failed to live. He willingly died on the cross for sinners. He bore judgment. He was buried. And He bodily rose from the dead. Salvation is therefore not something anyone earns. It is God’s gift of grace. The biblical response is repentance and faith. Repentance means turning from sin and rebellion toward God. Faith means trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—depending upon Him rather than personal goodness for reconciliation with God. Anyone may speak honestly to Jesus. A prayer might sound something like this:

A suggested prayer

Jesus, I know that I have sinned and cannot save myself. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died for sinners and rose from the dead. I turn from my sin and place my trust in You. Forgive me. Reconcile me to God. Make me new. Teach me to follow You as Savior and Lord. Amen. Those words are not a formula. A prayer does not save. Jesus saves. Anyone beginning to follow Christ should begin reading Scripture. The Gospel of John is an excellent place to start. Pray honestly. Learn what Jesus taught. Connect with a faithful local church where Scripture is taught clearly and Jesus and the gospel remain central. **ONE FAITHFUL SUMMARY** The Bible's teaching about Jesus does not begin in Bethlehem. The Old Testament establishes the identity of the one true God—the LORD who: creates, saves, shepherds, rules, judges, gives light, receives worship, and remains faithful to His people. Then the New Testament presents Jesus using remarkable language drawn from this biblical world. Jesus shares the Father's glory. Everything is created through Him. He forgives sins. He gives eternal life. He is Savior. He is Shepherd. He is King. He is Judge. He is Lord. Old Testament passages about YHWH are applied to Him. Yet Jesus is not the Father. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are personally distinct while Scripture affirms one God. Christians eventually summarized this biblical revelation with the word Trinity. Some passages are debated. Some Greek expressions require careful interpretation. Some scholars argue that belief in Jesus' deity developed gradually. Judaism and Islam reject the Christian reading of Jesus altogether. Those disagreements should be acknowledged rather than ignored. But the Christian case does not depend on one disputed phrase. It rests on a cumulative biblical pattern appearing across multiple New Testament writers and types of evidence. Jesus is included in: the work of creation, the saving work of God, the worship given to God, the glory of God, the judgment belonging to God, and Old Testament passages about the LORD. The names ultimately lead beyond theology to a Person. Jesus Christ. The eternal Son. The Good Shepherd. The Savior. The King. The Lord. **CONTINUE STUDYING** Read these passages slowly and compare them:

- Exodus 3:1–15
 - Deuteronomy 6:4–9
 - Psalm 23
 - Psalm 102:25–27
 - Isaiah 40:1–11
 - Isaiah 42:8
 - Isaiah 43:10–13
 - Isaiah 45:18–25
 - Ezekiel 34
 - Joel 2:28–32
 - Matthew 3:13–17
 - Mark 1:1–3
 - John 1:1–18
 - John 5:16–30
 - John 8:12–59
 - John 10:1–30
 - John 14:1–11
 - John 17
 - John 20:24–31
 - Romans 10:8–13
 - 1 Corinthians 8:4–6
 - Philippians 2:5–11
 - Colossians 1:15–20
 - Hebrews 1
 - Revelation 19:11–16
 - Revelation 21–22
- USE THE THREE-COLUMN METHOD** OLD TESTAMENT What name, title, action, attribute, or role describes God? NEW TESTAMENT Where is similar language used about Jesus?



CONNECTION

Does the New Testament: explicitly make the connection, strongly imply the connection, or simply present an interesting parallel worth exploring? This method helps readers appreciate genuine biblical connections without claiming more than Scripture itself reveals.

Final memory anchor

Jesus does not merely tell us about God. The eternal Son reveals Him. The Shepherd came for His sheep. The Savior came for sinners. The Creator entered His creation. The King took the form of a servant. The Judge bore judgment. The Light entered the darkness. And the Lord who deserves worship invites sinners to come to Him and live. SHARING AND ACCURACY DISCLAIMER

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