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Gospel Christology from Luke’s Perspective

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Gospel Christology from Luke’s Perspective

 Christology refers to determining nature, character, and portrait of the protagonist, Jesus of Nazareth, as described or extracted from the Gospel, which is an account of the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ. Four evangelists or writers of Gospel have described the life events and teachings of Jesus the Christ, and each has imparted a particular dimension or perspective to his portrayal. Further, different analysts have extracted different themes or portrayals from these Gospels as per their studies and analyses. The thesis of my paper is that Luke has portrayed Jesus Christ mainly as the Messiah of his nation.

**The Concept of Messiah**

 The concept of the Messiah is older than the emergence of Jesus the Christ. It has been prophesized in the earlier revelations about Jesus that he would be the Messiah of his nation. The events and details given in the Gospel also suggest the same thing. The four authors of the Gospel demonstrate their specific approaches in narrating the life account of Jesus the Christ. As per my research and analysis, I think that Luke portrays the protagonist as a Messiah. The concept of Messiah is different in the old and the new testaments. In the Old Testament, as the Jewish believers, Messiah is a Jewish king of the future. He will descend from the Davidic line, and his era is known as the Messianic period. Messianic period is an era in the coming time characterized by the rule of Messiah when there shall be no evil in the world and peace will reign all over the world. People will live in unity and there will be no discrimination based on religion, race, or other factors. Equality and prosperity would be the dominating truths on the face of the earth. In the New Testament, Messiah and Christ are equivalent, both of which refer to the same personality and develops the same portrayal. The word ‘Christ’ has the Greek origin, and it stands for 'Messiah'. The word 'Christ' has been used in the Gospel of Luke several times, which indicates that Luke's Gospel develops the character or portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah. “Jesus is the Christ … (Luke 9:20-22)" can be seen written in the Gospel of Luke, which suggests that Luke views Jesus Christ as Messiah. In the New Testament, Messiah is the personality who has been attributed as the savior and mentioned in the Old Testament. Christians believe that Jesus is the person about whom certain prophecies have been made in the Old Testament. Christians further believe that prophecies given in the Old Testament have become true with the emergence, life incidents, and teachings of Jesus the Christ. The clash of concepts between Jews and Christians is because people already had a concept of Messiah based on the Old Testament. When Jesus Christ started preaching in the nation, it was difficult for people to think of him as the prophesized 'Messiah'. In Luke’s Gospel, the concept of ‘King of the Jews’ has never been featured. Instead, while reading Luke's Gospel, it become evident gradually that Jesus was the Messiah of his nation who came to save them and bring them to light.

Difference in the Concepts of Jews and Christians

 In Gospel, Luke gives various titles to Jesus, which represent Luke's understanding of Jesus the Christ. However, the most prominent of these is Christ or Messiah. This implies that the concept of being human of Jesus is dominant on Luke's mind. He portrays Jesus Christ as the Messiah because he thinks that Jesus the Christ was the savior of humanity of his era, and he gave humanity lessons of courtesy and spirituality. Luke's Christology is much influenced by the idea of the Messiah. Luke's view is different from other authors in many ways. He does not refer to the idea of atonement. He does not feel any need to discuss these ideas, or some experts might say that these ideas were not known to Luke. Therefore, he did not mention them in his book. In the Gospel of Luke, one cannot see any clear indication of the pre-existence of Christ. One cannot also find any idea of Christ's union with the Christian. Experts say Luke might have disagreed with these ideas. Luke makes use of the Old Testament and cites certain passages from the Jewish scripture. Thus, he establishes that Jesus the Christ was the promised Messiah, as Jews had thought of a Messiah before. It is to be noted that the point of view of Jews about Christ has become very rigid in later centuries. They do not even accept someone to be a Jew who believes that Jesus was a Messiah. The conflict between followers of both these Abrahamic religions is strong, and each has its particular standing on the issue.

**Luke’s View of Christology**

Luke says about Jesus in Gospel that "Jesus, at his birth, was the Christ (Luke 2:11)". Luke's messianic view of Jesus has not altered anywhere. He calls Jesus Christ at different places, reinstating the messianic view of Jesus. The fact that Luke believes in the messianic view of Jesus can be observed in his other works as well, which can be presented as evidence to his view given above. Other researchers say that this increases the ambiguity and confusion of Luke's view on Christ. However, it can be seen the other way as well that Luke believes in this thing so unanimously that he does not hesitate to quote the same titles and descriptions at different times. This should be considered as an argument in support of Luke's view. Other researchers comment that Luke's writings might have some scribal error that arises such differences in the text. However, it cannot be ignored that Luke has not mentioned this title only in a few places. Rather, in very important places, it has been mentioned that Jesus was Christ or Messiah, such as the doctrinal passages. Critiques say that Luke has made transitions in words deliberately to prove Jesus to be Messiah. Whatever the point may be, it is evident that Luke had a strong belief and assertion that Jesus came to this world as Messiah, the savior of his nation.

**Jesus as Messiah**

While reading the Gospel of Luke, one can easily understand that Luke has the intention of representing Jesus as the son of David who was born to rule (Luke 1:32-35). Luke asserted through the underlying notion of the writing that Jesus the Christ was unique in his birth and no other child was born with this distinction. Theorists having opposite views often quote that the members of the Sanhedrin asked Jesus if he was the Christ, and they say that Jesus answered like from now on the son of man will be bestowed by God with His powers so that he might be a reference to God for people on earth (Luke 22:66-71). Normally, researchers think that this statement goes in favor of the other standings held for Jesus the Christ. However, in this research, it has been found more convincing that Jesus was the Messiah who was a reference to God and who appeared in his nation as the deliverer. If God has conferred on Jesus the Christ His powers, it means that God has sent him for saving the Christians from the cruelties of the world and the penalties of the hereafter. The imagery of being a human is crucial to Luke in his beliefs regarding Jesus Christ. Being a human, Jesus can understand and feel the pains and suffering s of humanity. Jesus can know to the fullest extent the problems of the marginalized as well as the outcasts. For Luke, the love of Jesus Christ is a universal theme that includes or encompasses everything. He seems to be the strongest supporter of this fact.

 A striking example can be quoted wherein Luke confirms his belief and representation of Jesus the Christ by referring to him calling the “savior” directly in his works (Luke 2:11). This particular term is not found in other Gospels anywhere except at one place only. Luke has a complete belief behind using this term and imparts a sense of function to this term while he use it at different points in his Gospel. Luke thinks that no other term can convey the meaning of salvation the way the word 'savior' can do it. Therefore, Luke's view of Jesus Christ comes to light without any doubt. He believes and asserts that Jesus Christ was a true Messiah and savior of the people to whom he has been sent by God. The use of the term 'savior' has many associated meanings with it, which clarify the scope and use of this term in a broader context. Being the savior, Jesus the Christ brings peace to humanity, resolves their conflicts, and make their paths to God easier for them. Being a savior, Jesus the Christ brings life to people, and awakens the sleeping people, dead as per their morality and good deeds. An interesting thing to be noted is that Luke rarely states the positive effects of the death of Jesus the Christ. All these things mentioned concerning Luke's views suggest that he believed in humanity of Jesus and that he was the Messiah and savior of people.

The Word “Messiah”, it Clashes, and Consequences

Luke is the only one of all the authors of Gospels who mentions the words of ‘Christ’ or ‘Messiah’. He uses these words when he mentions his sufferings in the Gospel (Luke 24:26-46). This idea was not present in the Old Testament or Judaism. It is not clear from where Luke got this idea and expressed it in the book. However, the use of these terms is unique to Luke's books that suggest he sees Jesus as the Messiah. Luke has also used the term 'King' and 'kingdom' in his gospel. When Jesus the Christ was having the last supper with his followers, he exclaimed that the way to God’s kingdom is only to serve the humanity (Luke 22:25-30). Jesus came to people as a Messiah with a message of God that good deeds only can pave their way to the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus’ Portrayal

Jesus Christ was the savior of the people and he saved them from being penalized for sins, by preaching of good beliefs and demonstrating how good life can be lead. He taught the people ways of saving themselves from the penalties of the hereafter (Corner, 2017). He showed them the right way of making decisions in life. He assured them that their choices will determine their fates. He did not stand actively against the enemies because of his wisdom, insight, and knowledge and led his people on the path of peace (Luke 2:52). He best understood the needs of his time, and he never took any initiative that was against what he preached the people. His wisdom was far ahead of his time, beyond the spans of centuries. He was the Messiah and he did the best in this regard through his teachings, character, and life incidents. Luke has tried to present that image of Jesus the Christ. He has portrayed the Messiah as the wisest, most knowledgeable, and most perfect human. His self-control seems to be exemplary and his piety was above all.

The Third Gospel and Christology

In reading of Gospel of Luke, it was strongly felt that the most important place to understand Luke’s Christology is the third Gospel. Luke shows that the Gospel is to improve the lives of humans and tell them the highest values of life. It emphasizes the humanity of Jesus as well. It gives six references to prove the fact that Jesus was dependent on God as are other humans, and he prays to God the best way (Strelan, 2016). Providing such references in the Gospel makes the point of Luke very clear. Luke has also mentioned the name of Jesus as Jesus of Nazareth that refers to the humanness of Jesus and indicates that the humaneness of Jesus was due to his humanness. This implies that the superior qualities, characteristics, and attributes of Jesus Christ indicate his humanity. In the third Gospel, it can be seen vividly that his sympathies were always with the poor and the oppressed (Henrichs-Tarasenkova, 2015). He was merciful towards sinners, women, poor, and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). He healed the diseased, and helped the needy fulfill their needs (Luke 7:36-50). Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus Christ gave special attention to the poor and helped them every way to survive and save their future (Luke 16:16-31).

 Jesus’ Assertion of being Messiah

Luke's Gospel has many references where it has been asserted that Jesus was the Messiah, and it can be seen underlying all through the Gospel as an underlying theme that is very evident. It has been recorded that various persons asked Jesus the Christ at different times if he were the Messiah, and he replied in positive. At some other time, Jesus Christ asked a person about himself who he was, and the addressee responded in assertion that he was the Messiah, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Another evidence about Jesus being the Messiah is his place of birth. It has been recorded in the Gospel that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, and it was the place where the Messiah has been promised in the Old Testament to emerge among people. Since nobody can control where he is to be born, this provides evidence that he was the Messiah, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke. Further, the last Passover is the right place where it can be seen that Jesus the Christ is proved to be the Messiah. Luke describes it the way that establishes with strong argument that he was the Messiah. He symbolized certain things with his characteristics and assured his followers that they can get redemption if they do the way he has taught them. Jesus Christ has demonstrated himself as the redeemer of his nation and he shows them the relevant signs as well (Luke 22:19, 22:20). Gospel of Luke is very clear on this event in Jesus' life (Godshall, 2017). This was the time when Jesus Christ prepared his followers for coming times that might be difficult for them. He explained to them their duties and told them about himself so that they might not remain ignorant of their Messiah as well as themselves too.

Jesus’ Last Events in Life

As per the portrayal presented in Luke's Gospel, Jesus Christ prove to be the Messiah in the last event of life narrated by Luke. The last event of his life can only be explained in the perspective of the Messiah, as he redeemed the nation of Israel and saved them from ill fate. He proved to be successful in every way by doing everything in his life with clear consciousness. He knew what is the perspective and objective of his role in the world and what the future events will bring about in his nation. His beliefs were firm and he chose the way his life deliberately, and all the events point to the most prominent theme in his life that he was the Messiah of Israel and he saved the people from eternal loss.

 One of the most prominent questions by Jesus the Christ that he asked from his disciples and followers as if they know who he was. He asked this question several times to make it known to them at their subconscious level that he was the Messiah so that they could never forget that. It was like he claimed to be the Messiah, the one who has been promised in the earlier Testament, and who will bring peace and spirituality to people. The assertion in his question, "who do you think that I am?" is enough evidence that he was the Messiah of Israel. Asking people directly about himself involves the fact that he must be recognized precisely by the followers. Any ambiguity regarding his true identity could have had severe effects on the doom of the whole nation. People have been engaged in altering the truths about the previous religious personalities and Jesus Christ knew that. Therefore, he wanted his followers to remember him without being mistaken.

Prophet-Hood and Messianic View

Finally, Luke emphasizes the prophet-hood of Jesus. Luke's Christological presentation cannot be completed without mentioning this particular aspect. The concept of the Messiah gets great strength with the idea of Jesus' prophet-hood. This is because only a prophet can be given such an exalted reverence by the people as is required to be associated with the Messiah. The Messiah is the highest rank a human can achieve in its life. Combining prophet-hood with messianic status will increase the honor and respect to the highest possible level. Jesus Christ truly can be attributed with such an honor and he has completely justified the honor and position.

**Comparison with Other Researches**

Different researchers have different interpretations of the Christology presented in Luke's Gospel. It is also clear that certain different portrayals also can be recognized in the Gospel. However, as per the current study, it has been found that the most prominent portrayal has been that of the Messiah. The existing researches have mentioned this as well as other portrayals that include teacher, great miracle worker, healer, liberator, and prophet. Those who say that his portrayal in the Gospel as a teacher argue that he has spent all his life in teaching people the meanings, values, and virtues of life. They cite references from Gospel that verify that Jesus the Christ is seen teaching people heavenly knowledge at many places (Edwards, 2015). These critiques are right to the extent that they say Jesus’ portrayal as a teacher is present in Gospel. However, it cannot be considered the dominant portrayal or interpretation of Jesus' personality in the Gospel, because other portrayals are also present with the same power. Then some critiques believe that the portrayal as prophet is stronger enough to claim to be the prevalent feature of his personality in the Gospel. However, it is also not that much stronger as portrayed in the Gospel. The whole of the Gospel is full of the incidents when Jesus the Christ is preaching people for living a virtuous life. However, it seems to be a principle work in his life that goes on continuously with the same strength. His miracles are no less than the incredible incidents that took place by his hand. He used to heal the incurable patients. The blind started seeing after he healed them. The dead resurrected when he called them. People believed what they saw, and they saw great miracles, which convinced them to believe that Jesus had divine powers in support of him. However, it did not qualify to be the most discerning and defining factor of his personality. Consequently, the defining characteristic of his personality is his being the Messiah. It is the peak of his work, as evident in the Gospel of Luke. The life incidents from beginning to endpoint to the one major distinction, that is, his work as the Messiah. As Luke is very keen to record the events in Jesus' life in chronological order precisely, the portrayal of the Messiah that emerges in the reader's mind is much realistic and accurate. Another distinguished feature of Luke's portrayal of Jesus is the spirituality of Jesus. The spirituality gives an exalted perspective to the portrayal, which is, in turn, supportive of the concept of the Messiah. Luke's Gospel also discusses that the spirit of Jesus is still present in this world, which further strengthens the view of Messiah about Jesus Christ. People have always wondered about his personality. However, a realistic and unbiased study of his life eliminates many misunderstandings that have evolved around Christology. He was a benefactor to the whole human race.

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