

Historical Development of Titles Applied to Jesus in New Testament

Timeline	Monarchy Period	EXILE	Post-Exilic & Intertestamental Period	1 st Century Period	In NT
	1000 BCE	500 BCE	200 BCE	4 BCE	100 CE
“Messiah” <i>(Anointed One - The Christ)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally referred to Kings and prophets – 1 Sam. 10:1, 1 Sam. 16:13, 1 Kngs 19:16 Some “messianic” passages do not include figure of leader, just establishment of righteous kingdom Separate roles of priests and kings 	<p>INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN RELIGION DURING BABYLONIAN EXILE:</p> <p>Dualism (this age/age to come), belief in resurrection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without monarchy, High Priests assume princely roles and “messianic” focus Focus shifts to idealized future kingdom ruled by God that keeps Law but political undercurrents of national hope for kingdom remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official merger of priest/king roles as Hasmonean kingdom realizes nationalistic dreams Levitic or Davidic Messiah? First Levitic, Davidic later after secularization of Priestly Class of Hasmoneans (became Sadducees) Many similarities with “Son of David” Establish just kingdom, liberate Israel from Gentiles, defend Torah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will usher in earthly kingdom with no end God’s instrument, not divine, but righteous and pure from sin Foremost task is to destroy God’s enemies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-eminent title for Jesus Military/nationalistic aspects of title rejected Exalts divine nature Weaves in ideas from other titles – establishment of Kingdom, suffering, redemption
“Son of Man”		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appears in Dan. 7 but disputed as to its meaning: self-referent, idealized figure, or stand-in for corporate entity Also found in Ezekiel – used as a descriptor of man’s weakness and place in God’s creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-existent heavenly being with no earthly existence Divine, bestowed with God’s glory, but ideal representative of man; will stand at head of “the elect” Hidden and secret from world; to be revealed at Judgment Will judge heaven, earth, angels, humanity Godly will share in kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will establish interim Millennial kingdom before Final Judgment Had begun to take on some “messianic” qualities in certain writers Doesn’t bring salvation, only judgment for sinners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most frequent title in Gospels Only used by Jesus to describe himself Early church didn’t use as title for Jesus Does convey divine authority Pathway for millennial theology into NT
“Suffering Servant” <i>Or</i> “Servant of Yahweh”		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References found in 4 passages in Isaiah – 42, 49, 50, 52-53 Idea of Israel as God’s servant not new, but concept of Servant’s suffering bringing healing and deliverance is new Servant is corporate in nature, not an individual Daniel 11-12 references “the wise” who make the many “righteous” thru “obedient suffering” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In light of Exile, suffering of nation seen as a way of testing the righteous, not just chastising the wicked Suffering has a beneficial motive Suffering of corporate Israel is divine love in action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merger of Isaiah and Daniel passages’ ideas of suffering as a way to righteousness A few see Servant identified as individual person, most still corporate in nature Never identified with the “Son of Man” One text does apply “Messiah” but the Gentiles suffer instead of Servant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Servant anchors meaning of Jesus’ ministry and vicarious suffering and death Explicit quotes from Isaiah passages used in Gospels Some thematic ties to “Son of Man” in Mark

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“Son of David”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References only to Davidic line of kings in Southern Kingdom, Judah 	INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN RELIGION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hope for re-establishment of Davidic line in Prophets to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconcile people to God Cleanse land of foreigners Draw people to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh Idealized mortal man who would establish eternal dynasty at future point – no current political movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official title appears 1st time in 50 BC in Psalms of Solomon Still mortal man from Davidic line Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will violently cast out foreigners Judge all nations and force them to serve Israel Reign over Israel in righteousness Purge unfaithful Israelites from among righteous Takes on some eschatological dimensions in overlap with “Messiah” title 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary to other titles Jesus rejects militaristic aspect Jesus is royal Davidic heir and fulfills Davidic covenant Ushers in Kingdom of God Rules over new Israel Brings salvation and healing to God’s people (Jew and Gentile)
“Son of God”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divine sonship applied to Israel and kings, also references angels Sign of special relationship, divine calling, experience of God’s love King exercises power over Israel and nations through divine sonship Lays foundation for later concepts of “Son of David” and “Son of God” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One occurrence in Dan. 3 – seen as a divine figure or one of the many gods of the Babylonian pantheon as recognized by Nebuchadnezzar (Fiery Furnace story) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Period usage in literature refers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angels – bring messages from God Righteous remnant of the people – corporate usage Charismatic individuals anointed to perform God’s work – Honi the Circle Maker Common usage in Roman world – “divine man” who comes from heaven or person with special abilities (heroes) Few connections between “Messiah” and “Son of God” but three references link titles in Dead Sea Scrolls 	<p>Signifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earthly mission of salvation Establishment of Kingdom of God Unique divine status – intimacy with Father Linked with Christian idea of Messiah Key to doctrine of Christ developed by church 	

“I AM” Statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John

Passage	“I AM...”	Comment
4:1 - 42	“I AM, the one speaking to you” (The Messiah)	Garners a faith response – she brings the whole town
6:20	“I AM. Do not be afraid.”	Similar to OT theophany in the fear of the disciples and message
6:35, 51	“...the bread of life.”	Contrasts with the perishable food the crowd asks for
8:12 (9:5)	“...the light of the world.”	Pharisees challenge Jesus’ claims to authority
8:24	“Unless you come to believe that I AM you will die in your sins.”	
8:28	“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that...”	
8:58	“Before Abraham was I AM”	Crowd wants to stone Jesus
10:7, 9	“...the sheep gate.”	Contrasts to the example of bad leadership of the Pharisees
10:11, 14	“...the good shepherd.”	
11:25	“...the resurrection and the life.”	Martha declares faith in Christ
13:19	“When it does happen, you will believe that I AM”	Jesus’ betrayal will show his divinity
14:6	“...the way, the truth, and the life.”	Jesus reveals the true way to the Father
15:1, 5	“...the true vine.”	Being connected to Jesus is what matters
18:5	“Who is it you want?...I AM”	Guards fall to the ground in fear

The Gospel of John purposefully uses a specific Greek grammatical phrase, *ego eimi*, translated as “I AM.” This ties back to the language of the OT where God reveals himself – “Tell them that I AM sent you” (Ex. 6:6).

Three different grammatical types of the phrase are seen in the gospel:

- Absolute use with no predicate, “Before Abraham was I AM.” (8:58)
- Understood predicate but not expressed, “I AM. Do not be afraid.” (6:20)
- Use with a predicate nominative, “I AM the sheep gate.” (10:7)

These statements perform two functions in the Gospel of John:

- 1) Identify Jesus as divine and equal to the Father
- 2) Assert Jesus’ claim as the new locus of faith (for both Jews and Gentiles) in contrast to other Jewish traditions