



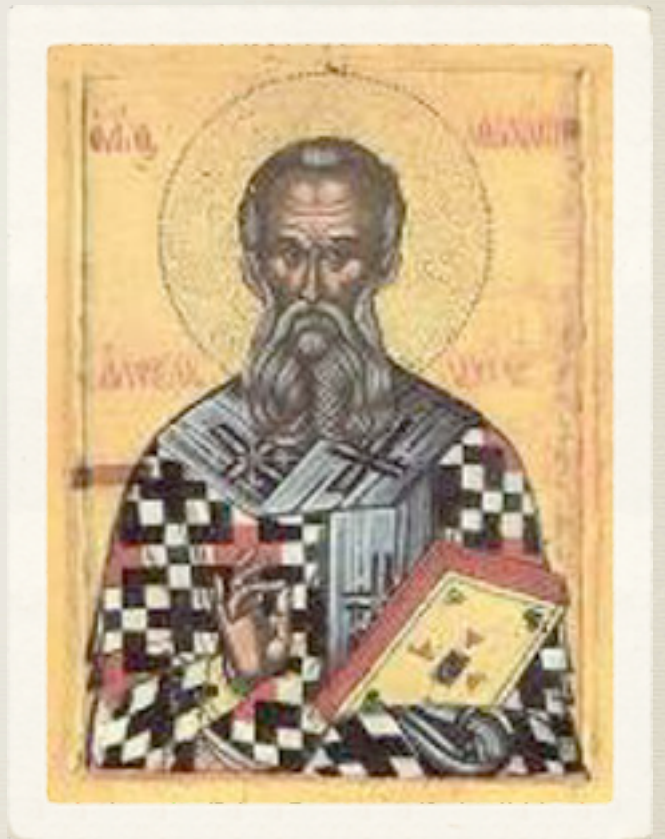
Christ Event: Climax of Creation

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself

2 Cor 5:19

Christ Event

- * ...the more ancient and venerable things (Genesis) were **sketches of the mysteries** recently revealed to us and that **they foreshadowed** the Truth.
- * Then the **Truth** itself **arrived** (Christ), and the whole corpus of the Holy Scripture was **perfected** without a shadow.



St Anastasius of Sinai,
7th century

Christ Event

- * *In the beginning was the **Logos**, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.* (John 1:1-5)
- * Nativity Hymn Proclaims:
"Today Christ is born. God has come down to earth, and man has gone up to heaven."



Incarnation of God



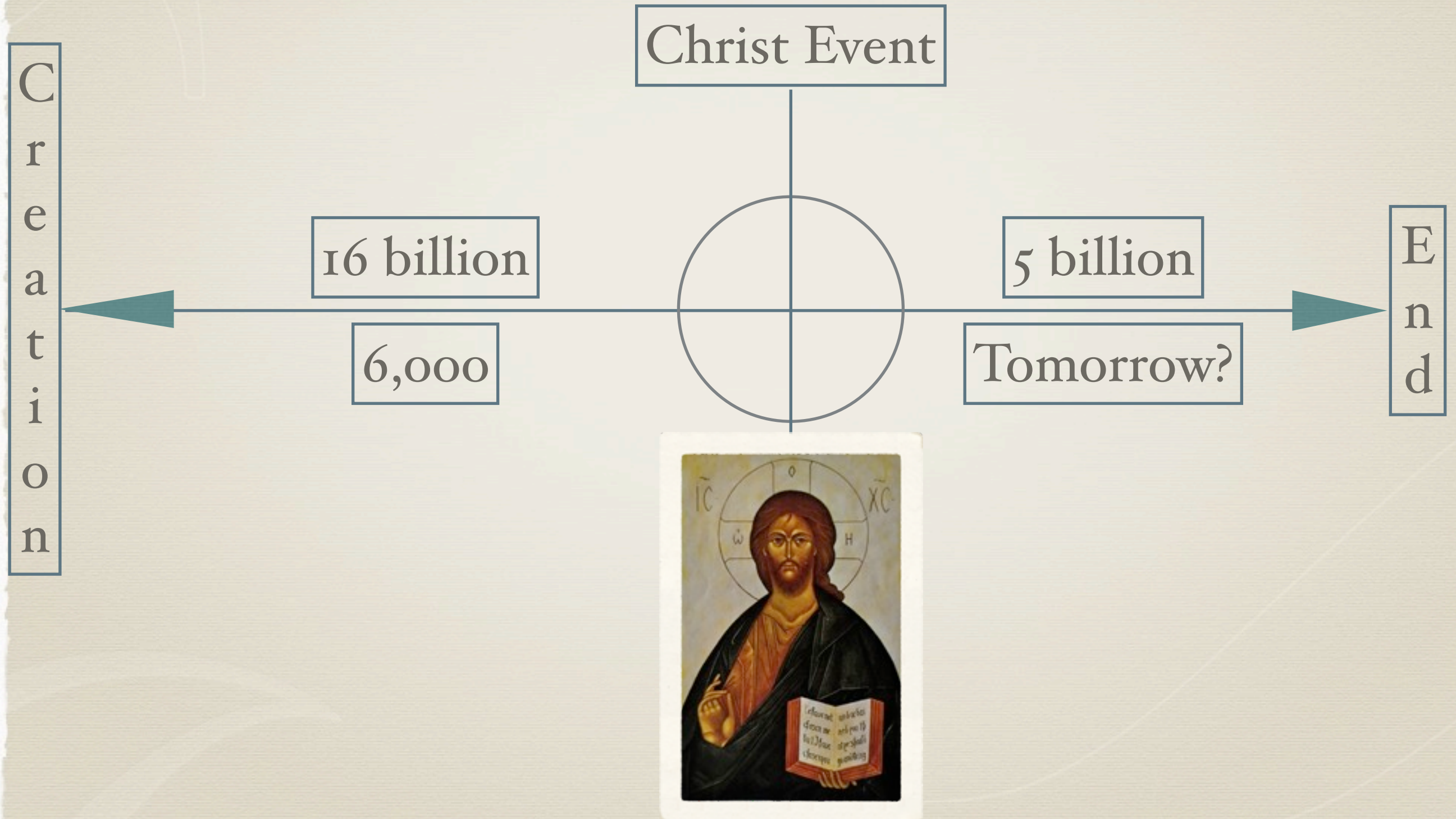
- * Central event of Christian faith & **climax** of **Creation**.
- * World was prepared for this event as part of **grand plan** of creation.
*But when the **fullness of the time** came, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law...* (Galatians 4:4)
- * Why is this event so significant?
 - * Indescribable event: infinite creator of all united with Man, taking on flesh from a virgin woman.
 - * God **manifests the divine image** given man, showing **unity** of Creation and God through mankind.

Incarnation of God



- * How can science explain this event that mixes infinity with space and time?
 - * Science can only deal with matters of space and time.
 - * not subject to natural laws.
 - * beyond all scientific inquiry.
- * Is **historical event** - 2000 years ago and in a specific place - Palestine

Created Time



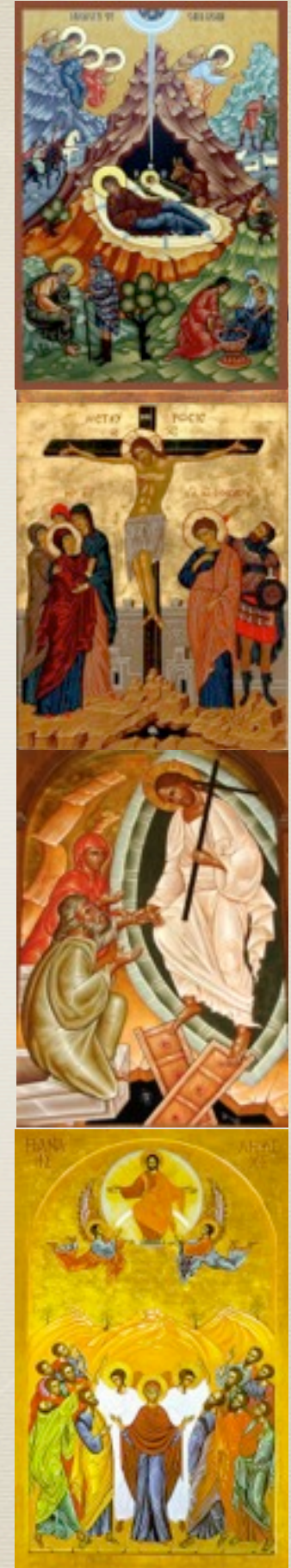
Christ Event

- * Externally what impact does this have on creation?
- * Internally what do we know it to mean?
 - * **Union** of man and God.
 - * **Restoration** of divine image, renewal, and pathway to His likeness.
 - * Realization of **salvation** of mankind.
 - * Previously, unable to overcome sinfulness and separation from God.
 - * **Eternal life**
- * Based on our **faith** we must view creation through perspective of this event. Why?
 - * Without it what is meaning of creation?



Christ Event

- * Following Incarnation what did He do?
 - * Taught, prepared His disciples, unjustly killed, resurrected, ascended to heaven to sit at right hand of Father.
- * Why?
 - * To **lead us**, show us the way for healing
 - * Become **one** with Him, to be glorified - **Theosis**. For our **salvation**.



Christ Event

- * How is this event perpetuated?
 - * Through the **Holy Spirit** Christ sent on Pentecost ten days after His Ascension.
- * His presence maintained through the work of His **Church**
 - * In Liturgies, Holy Eucharist, its Members led through purification and illumination to glorification or union with Christ.
- * **No natural cause** can be attributed to its perpetuation other than communion of creature man with his Creator.
- * Independent of natural laws.



Christ Event



- * What is cause of its perpetuation?
 - * God in Person of **Holy Spirit**.
Sent and directed by Christ.
- * **Church** is both **finite & beyond space and time**.
 - * What do we do in **Divine Liturgy**?
 - * Divine Liturgy we call on God **in His kingdom**,
uncreated and beyond all time or space.
 - * Joined by angels and saints
 - * Experience **true presence** of **Christ** in this greater realm.
- * Only Christ Event accounts for Church's **stability** all over world as worshiping community, preaching message of God, calling all to become **glorified**.

Christ Event

- * Where do we find **ultimate truth**?
In forms of ancient Philosophers, in mathematical formulas of scientists on in the Christ Event?
- * Participation in Christ is participation in **Reality** greater than limited reality of physical world.
- * Through constant participation in this event we form **communion** with God that sustains our existence into **eternity**.
- * What is Reality?
 - * **Christ** (Logos) is basis of our existence
There is **no scientific explanation**.



St Irenaeus (2nd Century)



- * *Through the creation itself the Word reveals the Creator... Similarly through the law and the prophets the Word proclaimed both Himself and the Father....*
- * *Finally through the **Word made visible** and palpable, the **Father was revealed**.*
- * *The creation was granted to mankind
1st to provide the **knowledge** that there was a creator and
2nd **after the incarnation** to **provide the meaning of creation** as a precondition for the salvation history.*

Christ Event

- * Question: Did God **plan creation** of universe in specific designed form to bring mankind into existence to make the incarnation of Logos of God possible? If so **how?**

Christ Event

- * Generally understood - world created because it was God's plan.
- * Man could contemplate beauty and order in universe to know God, but not sufficient.
- * Sent his Only Begotten Son to take on human flesh so we could **know** the creator Himself and become **united** with Him **forever** in mutual **love**.
- * The incarnation is **not intrusion** into process of creation **but fulfillment** of eternal purpose of universe.



Christ Event

- * What is unique about human kind?
- * Capacity to know **both** creation of **Physical realm** & to connect it to **Spiritual realm**, God's eternal kingdom.
- * We have ability to perfect ourselves to become like God.
- * We are shown **way to perfection** through Incarnation.



Christ Event

- * Where does it all begin?
 - * God's **creation out of nothing**,
work of a loving God to teach meaning
of **age to come**.
- * What is age to come?
 - * When **all** creation will be **transfigured**
and space and time will be redeemed
through the **Resurrection**.



Christ Event

- * How did coming of Christ and His Resurrection change human situation?
- * Lifted mankind out of a law of decay and corruption.
- * Gave a chance for **renewal** and entering His kingdom - beyond all visible elements of the creation



Christ Event

- * However science uncovers its wonders, we can marvel at **how God prepared** the world for benefit of humankind.

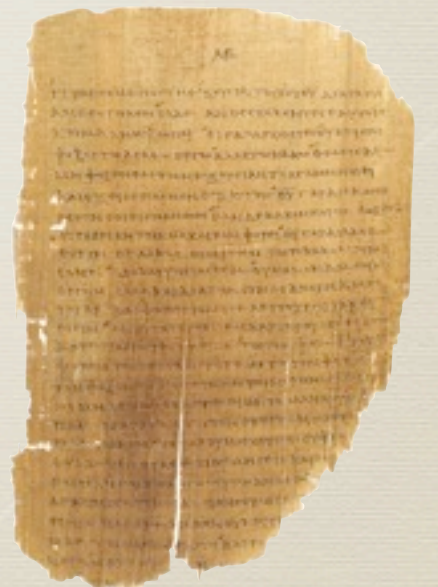


Christ Event

- * What is **Cosmology**?
 - * Science of the origin and development of the universe.
 - * Can help us reveal **features** of creation.
 - * Whatever we learn is **about** the Creation, not Creation itself.
 - * Can it help us understand Christ Event?
 - * Can it help us reach deification, theosis?
 - * No. Possible only through an **intimate relationship** with Christ.
- * Ultimate theory of **physics** can **never replace** truth that all **creation** is **work of God** for purpose **revealed** in the **incarnation of Christ**.

Historical Evidence?

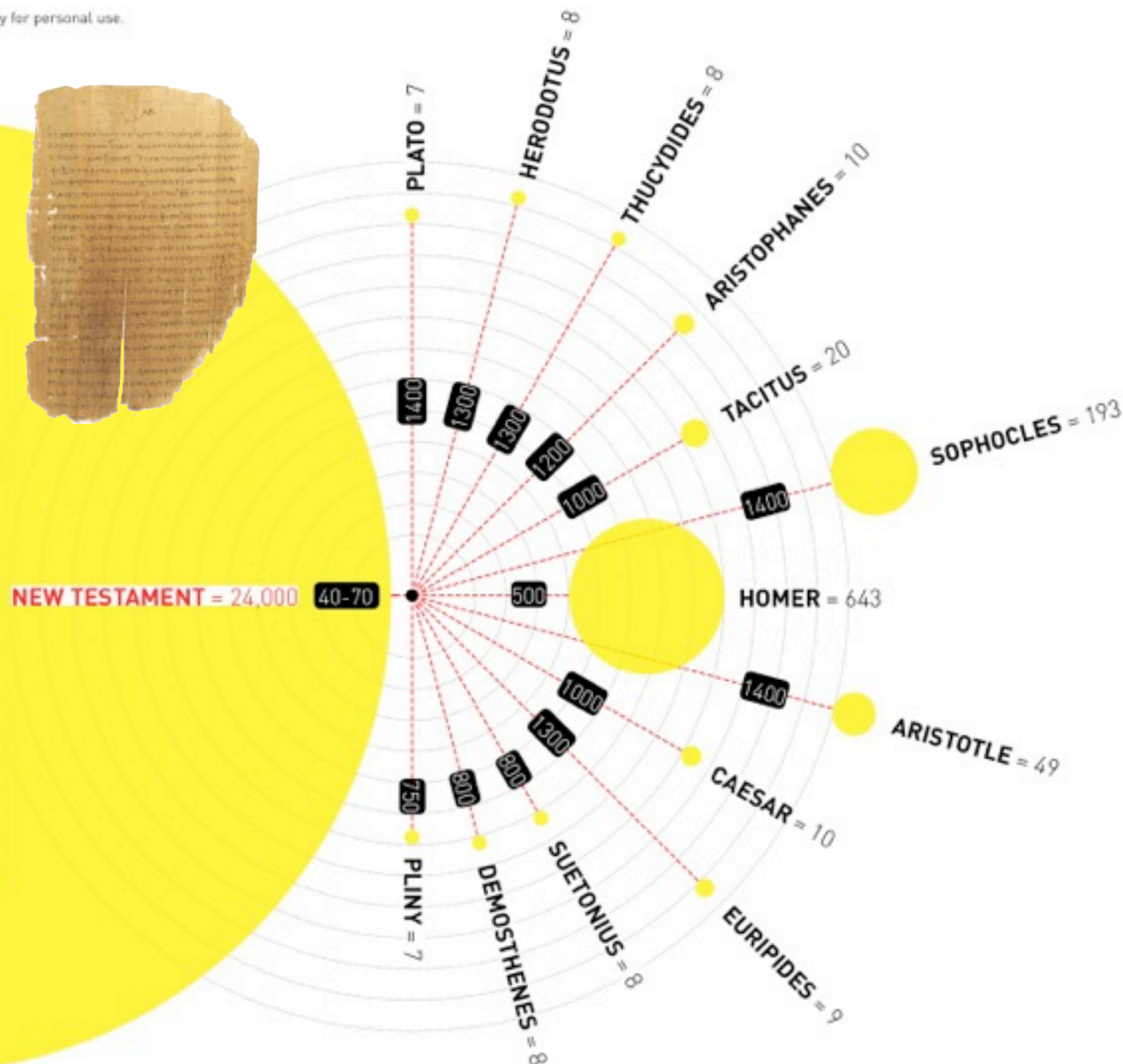
- * Is it possible that this Christ Event only a myth?
- * No! **Historical** fact.
Scientifically documented in ancient documents including eyewitnesses.
- * Segments of John from **29 years** after original.
Thousands of complete manuscripts.
- * Also Early Roman and Jewish sources.



THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED TO OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

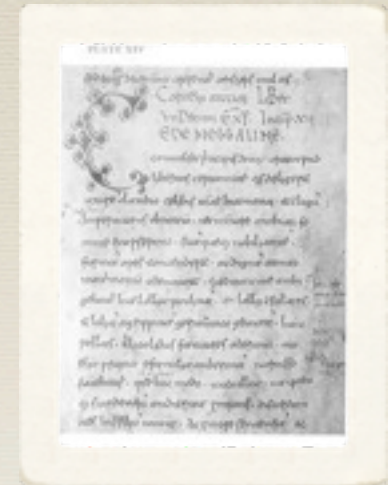
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AUTHOR / TEXT	EXISTING COPIES	YEARS BETWEEN ORIGINAL & EARLIEST SURVIVING COPIES
NEW TESTAMENT	24,000	40-70
HOMER / ILIAD	643	500
SOPHOCLES	193	1400
ARISTOTLE	49	1400
TACITUS	20	1000
CAESAR	10	1000
ARISTOPHANES	10	1200
EURIPIDES	9	1300
SUETONIUS	8	800
DEMOSTHENES	8	800
THUCYDIDES	8	1300
HERODOTUS	8	1300
PLINY	7	750
PLATO	7	1200





Tacitus (c. 56–c. 117)



- * A senator and a historian of the Roman Empire
- * In his Annals mentions Christianity and "Christus", while describing Nero's persecution of this group following the Great Fire of Rome c. **64**, he wrote:
- * *Nero fastened the **guilt** of starting the blaze and inflicted the most exquisite **tortures** on a class **bated** for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. **Christus**, from whom the name had its origin, **suffered the extreme penalty** during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...*



Josephus (c. 37–c. 100)



- * A Jew and Roman citizen wrote *Antiquities of the Jews* in **93 AD**.
- * *About this time came **Jesus**, a wise man, if indeed it is appropriate to call him a man. For he was a performer of **paradoxical feats**, a teacher of people who accept the unusual with pleasure, and he won over many of the Jews and also many Greeks. He was the **Christ**. When Pilate, upon the accusation of the first men amongst us, condemned him to be **crucified**, those who had formerly loved him did not cease to follow him, for he **appeared to them on the third day, living again**, as the divine prophets foretold, along with a **myriad of other marvelous things** concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.*

History of Early Church

- * Many tried to deny or distort this Event. Why?
- * Church struggled to maintain the truth of His incarnation. What did believers do?
- * Canon of New Testament
Ecumenical Councils
Divinely inspired writings of Church Fathers.
Apostolic succession of clergy

History of Church

- * In addition to the Marcion & Gnostics, what was one of early heretical ideas about the nature of God that had to be defended against by the Fathers?

Heresy of Arius - 4th C.

- * Presbyter from Alxenadria who believed:
 - * Christ united himself with a human body taking place of the rational soul
 - * Christ has communication with nor direct knowledge of God beyond that of all creatures
 - * Liable to change and sin but God gave him grace in advance.
 - * He is God in name only

Heresy of Arius - 4th C.

- * The Son of God **did not** always exist, but was **created** by God and is therefore **distinct from God** the Father. **Christ was a creature.**
- * Belief is grounded in Gospel of John
"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28)
- * St. Alexander supported Church Tradition on the equality in the Trinity also with Scripture:
- * *"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) and "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21)*

Heresy of Arius - 4th C.

- * Attacking doctrine of Holy Trinity with innovation
- * Philosophical view of one who did not know the uncreated nature of God by experience.
- * How was this resolved?
 - * Constantine called a council of the Bishops.
1st Ecumenical Council



1st Ecumenical Council



- * Where: Nicene in **325**
- * Key participants: Athanasius the Great, Nicholas of Myra, Spyridon of Trimythous, Alexander of Alexandria, and Paphnutius of Egypt. Over 300 Bishops were present.
- * Many had marks of Persecutions: Potaman of Herkleia had his right eye plucked out, Paul who had been tortured with red hot irons and crippled in both hands...
- * Many illustrious for ascetic life: Iakovos of Nisibis, Spyidon of Cyprus
- * They were illumined and glorified now recognized as saints.

Saint Spyridon



- * Shepherd in youth.
- * Had practice of offering help to anyone in need.
- * Became bishop - Known for his prayers that led to end of long drought + many other miracles
- * Suffered tortures: one eye was cut out and the calf of his left leg severed.

Saint Spyridon



- * Relatively unlearned,
Arians feared his miracles and deeds would influence decisions of more educated fathers.
- * Debated a philosopher defending Arius:
He said to him know he was trapped by the limits of his rational mind, *“In the name of Jesus Christ, listen to me and hear what I have to say to you.”*

Saint Spyridon



- * Silent for a moment, he continued,
 - * *"Can't you now realize how true all of this is, O philosopher? Consider this simple and humble example:*
 - * *Created and mortal beings and are not worthy to resemble the One who is divine in being and ineffable. Since we believe more readily through our eyes than through what we merely hear with our ears, I want to prove something to you using this brick.*
 - * *It is composed of three elements which combine to make it one single being and nature.*

Saint Spyridon



- * Made the sign of the holy Cross with his right hand while holding a brick in his left hand, and he said, *"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"* while squeezing the brick.
- * Flames rose into air, water poured down upon ground and clay alone remained in his hand!
- * In awe, Philosopher accepted Traditional faith, rejoicing that the saint had overcome his own logic. Arian heretics were at a loss.
- * Grace working in him proved more powerful in clarifying matters about divine nature of Christ than rhetorical knowledge of others.



Emperor Constantine



- * Did Constantine interfere?
- * Modeled council after Roman senate where emperor had **no** right to vote.
- * Did **not** dictate to the council.
- * He affirmed its conclusions after all the deliberations had concluded.
- * He wrote to the Bishops, "*Whatever is decided in the holy councils of bishops must be attributed to the **divine will.***"

1st Ecumenical Council

- * Heresy introduced by Arius was condemned.
- * Creed agreed upon at the council affirms what had been taught from the time of the Apostles.

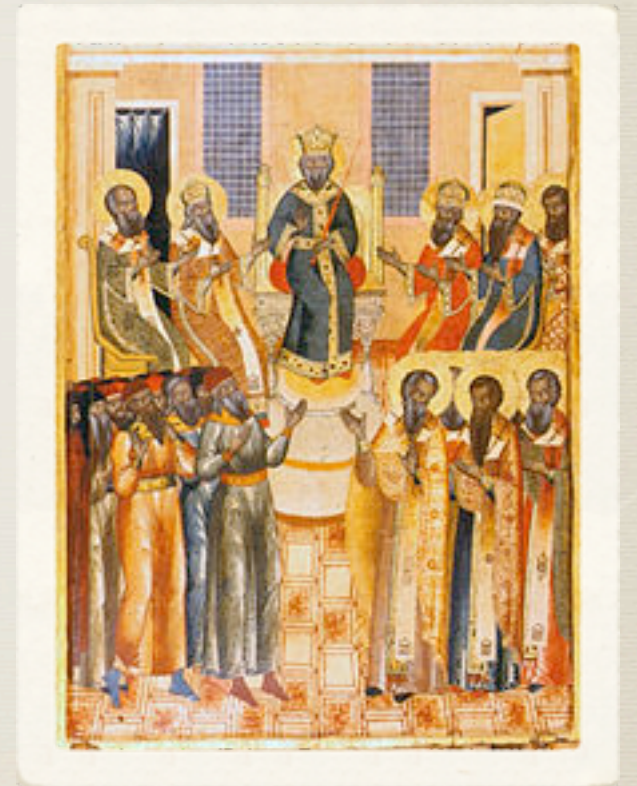


Creed

- * *I believe in **one God**, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*
- * *And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **only-begotten Son of God**, begotten of the Father **before all ages**;*
- * *Light of Light, **true God of true God**, begotten, not created, of **one essence with the Father** through Whom all things were made.*
- * Reaffirmed fundamental **Apostolic Truth**:
Jesus Christ both **fully Human** and **fully God**.

2nd Ecumenical Council

- * When: 381 in Constantinople
- * Key participants: Gregory of Nanzianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Meletius of Antioch, Cyril of Jerusalem and about 150 other Bishops
- * Clarified role of **Holy Spirit** according to Apostolic Tradition.



Creed

- * *And in the **Holy Spirit**, the Lord, the Creator of life, Who **proceeds from the Father**, Who **together** with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.*
- * Known as Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed

3rd Ecumenical Council

- * When: **431** in Ephesus
- * Rome had fallen and West was dominated by barbarian thought.
- * Empire now centered in Constantinople.
- * Key Participants: 160 Bishops including Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius - Archbishop of Constantinople



Nestorian innovation

- * Nestorius objected to title of Mary as "**birth-giver of God**", Theotokos.
- * *"let no man call Mary Theotokos, for Mary was only a human being and it is **impossible** that **God** should be **born of a human being**."*
- * Title was **not new** - part of Tradition of Church. Included in oldest Greek prayer used by Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nanzianzus and others.



Nestorian innovation

- * Why was this significant?
- * Nestorius wanted her called Christokos because he said Jesus was not fully divine but a **man adopted** by the divine Logos.
- * After Mary bore Jesus He then became a vehicle for divinity.
- * Main defender in this case was Cyril Patriarch of Alexandria.



3rd Ecumenical Council

- * Council upheld **Tradition** condemning Nestorius
- * Affirmed Jesus was born of human flesh as one person and both fully man and fully God.
- * It was a birth of immaculate conception. Mary remained a virgin.
- * The Creed of the last council was **affirmed** and to be used by all Churches.
- * Again Tradition upheld against innovations.



Mary - Theotokos

- * Mary plays a key role in God's plan for creation.
- * How?
 - * Through her comes the Christ - Event
God was united with Mankind. She is the willing vehicle for the crowning event in Creation.
- * We **honor** and **venerate** the Virgin Mary as
"more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious without compare than the Seraphim ..."
- * Honored in every service, and we ask for her **intercession** before the throne of God.



Mary - Theotokos

- * How did her story begin?
- * Born of **aged parents** who promised to dedicate her to life in the Temple (Nativity: September 21)
- * **At 3** taken to Temple and lived there until about **13 years** of age. (Entry to Temple: Nov 21)
- * Joseph, an widower, chosen to **protect her** so she could remain a virgin.



Annunciation

- * March 25
- * Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her she would conceive and bear a son, even though she "***knew no man.***"

Luke 1:26-38

- * Gabriel: "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. **Blessed art thou** among women.*"
- * "*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the **Son of the Most High**: ... and of his kingdom there **shall be no end.***"
- * How did she respond?



Annunciation



- * *"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"*
- * *"And the angel answered... 'The **Holy Spirit** shall come upon thee, and the **power of the Most High** shall overshadow thee: therefore also that which shall be born of thee shall be called the **Son of God**... For with God nothing shall be impossible.'"*
- * *And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; **be it unto me according to thy word.**' And the angel departed from her."*
- * She of free choice became obedient to God, Uniting her will to the will of God.

Mary - Theotokos



- * What is significant about how she used her free will?

- * Used it the way Lord intended.

In Lord's words she, "*heard the word of God and **kept it.***" (Luke 11:28)

- * Figured greatly in the OT prophecies, the most important of which is that of Isaiah:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

- * Through her personal sinlessness she fulfilled all the hopes and prophecies of Israel.

Theotokos



- * Orthodox know Blessed Virgin lived a sinless life but was born in ancestral sin just like any other person.
- * Reject Roman Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception of Mary.
- * If Mary had not been born in ancestral sin, God could not have assumed sinful human nature from her.
- * St. Gregory Nazianzen wrote, *“For that which He has not assumed He has not healed.”*

Theotokos



* Prayer from service of Compline has beautiful words:

*“thy glorious birth-giving has
united God the Logos to man and
joined the fallen nature of our race to heavenly things.”*

A Model



- * She is model for us.
- * St. Maximos the Confessor says in reference to Christian goal of becoming Christ-like:
- * *Just as the Theotokos gave birth to Christ in a bodily way, so we must give birth to Christ in an unbodily or spiritual way.*
- * *In so doing, we **imitate her practical spiritual life**, including the **purity and humility** by which she formed her **free will** into **perfect obedience to the Will of God**.*

Synergia

- * Mary's obedience is an example of **synergy**, or cooperation, with God. For that reason we sing, *"For through her has salvation come to the whole human race."*
- * Concept of synergy essential to Orthodox understanding of salvation. Why?
- * Synergy is **exercise of free will** to **accept** God's gift of grace. **Not** idea that **human merit** required or applicable for salvation.
- * For Salvation we must use our free will to **cooperate with divine will**.



4th Ecumenical Council

- * when: **451** in Chalcedon at shrine of St. Ephemelia.
- * Key Players: 500 Bishops , Cyril of Alexandria
- * Euctyches taught that **before the Incarnation Christ was of two natures but after there was one nature** (monophysites).
the spiritual principle.
- * Pope Leo's tome defending Tradition of two natures of Christ was accepted.
- * Creed was **affirmed again**.
- * Agreed that **Creed** could **never** be **altered**.



5th Ecumenical Council

- * When: **553** in Constantinople
- * Key players: 150 - 170 Bishops
- * Controversy over question: *“How could God die?”*
- * Just as it is legitimate to say God was born, we can also say God died. It is God-made-man of whom this is said. God in His transcendence is subject neither to birth or death. - Kallistos Ware
- * Again affirmed **two natures** of Christ.

6th Ecumenical Council

- * When: Constantinople, **680-1**
- * Monothelites. Argued, Only one divine will in Christ
- * Council upheld Tradition. *Just as there are in Christ two natures, divine and human, so there is in Christ not only **divine will but also a human will**;*
- * *if Christ did not have a human will like ours, he would not be truly a man as we are.*
- * *These two wills are not contrary to one other, for the human will is at all times freely obedient to the divine will.* – Kallistos Ware
- * **Our task is to unite our will to His divine will.**

7th Ecumenical Council

- * When: Nicaea 787
- * Iconoclasts - objected to use of **images** of Christ.
- * *Proclaimed that since Christ became true man, it is **legitimate** to depict his face upon the holy icons; and, since Christ is one person and not two, these icons do not just show us his humanity in separation from his divinity, but they show us the **one person** of the eternal Logos incarnate.* – Kallistos Ware



Nature of Christ

- * **One Hypostasis** - one person, one personality
- * **Two natures**, Divine and Human, immutably & unconfusedly, do not mingle and are not converted one into the other.. forever united.
- * **Two wills**, divine and human where the human will was subjected to the divine will.
- * Flesh deified was not destroyed. **Human will** not destroyed but willingly **subjected to divine will**.



Christ Event

- * Ecumenical Councils continually **defended** the Christ Event.
- * Orthodox Church known as **Church of the Seven Councils**.
- * Doctrine remains unaltered from time of Apostles protecting the true nature of the Christ Event.
- * Christ Event (Incarnation), is most significant event in all the acts of Creation.



Christ Event



- * Christ came as second Adam showing us true nature of our personhood as human beings.
- * He is the perfect man he calls us to become.
- * Aim of all creation -- to **be deified through our union with Him.**



"The glory which thou hast given to me I have given to them, that they may be one, as we are one: I in them and thou in me, may they be perfectly united in one." (John 17:22-23)

Christ Event



- * Through Councils of the Church, through those participants who are illumined, the Church has maintained and clarified the essential essence of the Christ Event.



Genesis - Creation

Next Time