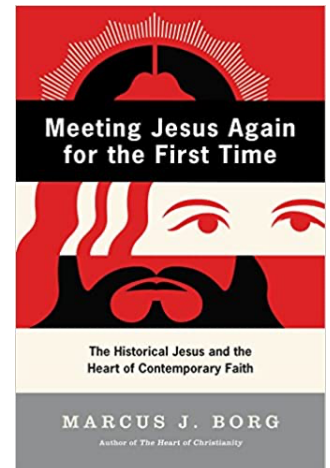


# Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time

by Marcus Borg

## Study/Preparation Guide: Session 5



1. Read the following pages from *MJAFT*
  1. Chapter 4: Jesus, the Wisdom of God: Sophia Become Flesh [pp 96-118]  
—or—
  2. Summary on reverse – if you don't have the book
2. Check out this on-line reference for a biography of Borg, a list of his books, as well as some supplementary information for our discussions:  
<http://www.aportraitofjesus.org>

### Focus Questions for our discussion:

- What do you make of the image of Jesus as the “Wisdom of God”? [pp 96-7]
- What strikes you about the role of Sophia in Hebrew wisdom tradition? [pp 98-102]
- Discuss the associations between Jesus and Wisdom in:
  - The Synoptic Gospels [pp 102-3]
  - Paul [pp 103-7]
  - John [pp 107-8]
- Discuss the meaning for you when Borg speaks of “both son and wisdom”. [pp 108-11]



## Summary: Chapter 5

Relation of Wisdom to Jesus is Christological

NT images Jesus as emissary, child and incarnation of the wisdom of God – Jesus was the “Wisdom of God”

Christology is that area of theology that focuses on the relationship between Jesus and God humanity and divinity: how they’re related, etc.

Nicene Creed:

3-fold division shows developing Trinitarian dogma

Use of Creed in church helps shape how we think of Jesus: i.e., “Son of God”

“Son of God Christology is the core of the popular image of Jesus” (97)

But, in NT period, there was no official Christology; NT has a number of images, metaphors, for imaging the significance of Jesus and his relationship to God

Yes, “father/son” images abound, but also “Jesus as the embodiment of incarnation of “the wisdom of God”

“Seeing this wisdom Christology can affect our image of Jesus in more than one way. It not only can enrich our imaging of Jesus but also, as we shall see, provides a window into seeing the nature of Christological language.

### Wisdom in the Jewish Tradition

In Jewish tradition “wisdom” can:

- Refer to a literary genre
- Collected teachings of sages
- “Wisdom of God”

Wisdom often personified – female form (*hokmah*) or (*Sophia*)

- Proverbs 1 – Sophia’s role is prophetic
- Proverbs 8 - 9 - source of truth, insight and strength
  - Role in creation - chief artisan
- Sirach 24 - Created from the beginning; everywhere present
- Wisdom 7 and 10 - everywhere present; fashioner of all things
  - She has qualities and functions normally attributed to God

“Sophia is closely associated with God, at times becoming indistinguishable from God in terms of the functions and qualities ascribed to her, so that one may speak of a ‘functional equivalency between Sophia and God” (102)

“Sophia is not simply personification of wisdom in female form, but personification of God in female form” (102)

### The Synoptic Gospels

Jesus speaks of self as child of Sophia: “Sophia is vindicated by her children” (Lk 7.33-35)

Early Christians say Jesus as spokesperson and child of Sophi

[A lot of speculation here!]

## Paul

Wisdom is central category for the apostle Paul

Paul's letters the earliest witness to early Christianity

Connection to "wisdom" is *justification*

- A legal metaphor – one wanted to be "found right" – i.e., right with God
- We are made right with God *by grace*
- *Justification by grace* is justification freely given by God as a gift
- Note distinction: justification by law vs. justification by grace = similar distinction as that made by Jesus
- "Wisdom of this world" vs "wisdom of God" ( 1 Corinthians)
- Wisdom of Christ crucified – grounded in the Spirit that is from God, not the spirit of this world
- Paul subverted the world of conventional wisdom

Paul wrote of Christ as the "power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1.23-24)

Colossians 1 – language used about Christ is same language used about Wisdom

## The Gospel of John

Presentation of Jesus in wisdom language most pronounced in John.

John 1

- Not "in the beginning was Jesus", but "in the beginning was the *logos*"
- "*Logos*" functionally equivalent to *Sophia*
- *Sophia* becomes incarnate

## A Complementarity of Christological Images

As voice of alternative wisdom, Jesus is also the voice of Sophia

Earliest Christology of Christians == use of Sophia language

Gender complementarity of Christologies – important in a tradition that is heavily patriarchal

As one who knew the Spirit, Jesus *may* have imaged and/or experience the Spirit as *Abba* and as Sophia

Imaging Jesus as "son of God" and as "wisdom of God" are both in the oldest traditions of Christianity

Presence of both "son" and "wisdom" Christologies

Jesus was Son of God, the *logos* of God, and the *Sophia* of God.