In my last post I showed why it is so widely acknowledged that Jesus began his ministry by associating with John the Baptist, an apocalyptic preacher of coming doom. The reason that matters for our purposes in this thread is that it shows that Jesus chose, of his own free will, to join an apocalyptic movement at the very beginning of his public ministry. That certainly demonstrates that Jesus started out his public life as a fervent advocate of a Jewish apocalyptic message. He too must have been expecting the judgment of God soon to appear in which those aligned against God would be destroyed and those who sided with God would be rewarded.

That in itself does not show, however, that Jesus’ own proclamation, after he got started, was apocalyptic. Maybe he changed his mind! Maybe he decided John was wrong! Maybe he went his own direction!

There are two arguments against the idea that he changed. The first is one I have already recounted several posts ago: apocalyptic sayings are significantly attributed to Jesus in all of the early strands of our Gospel traditions - that is, in all the sources lying behind our earliest Gospels: Mark, Q, M, and L. These four sources are all independent of each other. They haven’t derived their teachings from one another. They independently report that Jesus proclaimed an apocalyptic message.

But there is an equally important consideration as well. It can be shown beyond any doubt that...

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