

Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology

With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including God's
Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity

Lesson Five: Christology—The Doctrine of Jesus Christ (An Overview)
Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

For Reading Prior to Class

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

Remember where Christology fits
within systematic theology.

Review the logic of the loci in the next slides.

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

1. **Theology:** What the Bible Reveals about God
2. **Anthropology:** What the Bible Reveals about Mankind
3. **Christology:** What the Bible Reveals about Jesus Christ
4. **Soteriology:** What the Bible Reveals about Salvation (This doctrine is also called **Pneumatology** and **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, What the Bible Reveals about the Holy Spirit, the key agent in applying Christ's redemption for our salvation)
5. **Ecclesiology:** What the Bible Reveals about the Church
6. **Eschatology:** What the Bible Reveals about the Last Things or The End Times

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology: Biblical Derivation and Meaning of the Greek Terms

1. **Theology** < θεός (*theos*) → God + λόγος (*logos*) → word, subject, message
2. **Anthropology** < ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*) → mankind + *logos*
3. **Christology** < Χριστός (*Christos*) → Christ, the Anointed One + *logos*
4. **Soteriology** < σώζω (*sōzō*) → save, keep safe, preserve, rescue, make well + *logos*; cognate: σωτήρ (*sōtēr*) → Savior, redeemer, deliverer, preserver.
Pneumatology < πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) → Spirit (the Holy Spirit); wind, breath + *logos*. **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, specifically to individuals.
5. **Ecclesiology** < ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) → assembly, congregation, church < ἐκ (*ek*) → from, out of, away from + καλέω (*kaleō*) → call, name, summon, invite → literally, (the ones) called out (by the Lord) + *logos*
6. **Eschatology** < ἔσχατον (*eschaton*) → last + *logos*: individual and cosmic end

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

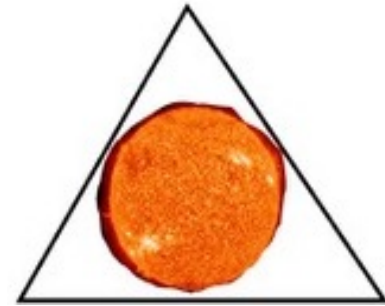
- 1. Theology:** Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
- 2. Anthropology:** God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
- 3. Christology:** Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
- 4. Soteriology:** This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
- 5. Ecclesiology:** This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
- 6. Eschatology:** When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christology shows how the whole Bible is God's progressive plan of saving sinful human beings, made very good and in God's very image but who are now unworthy to be in his presence, and how that plan points to and is fulfilled in Christ Jesus of heaven and Nazareth. Christology engages all God's Word teaches about who Jesus Christ is (e.g., the only-begotten Son of the Father, thus the Second Person of the triune God, that he has two natures, being 100% human and at the same time 100% divine, thus with pure love coming from the core of his being); what he is like (e.g., that he did not sin and kept the entire law of God perfectly and that he loves and died for all people, but that his death is efficacious only for those who truly believe in him); what he came to do (e.g., how he is God's only provision for reconnecting humans with God who is most holy, that his righteousness is credited to those who believe in and follow him); that he was resurrected from the dead, giving assurance of our resurrection; that he now reigns; and that he is coming again to complete God's plan of redemption in him for all creation. In Christ we see how greatly God desires to be involved in our lives, because he loves us. In Christ God has provided the only means for our experiencing his most holy presence, while maintaining his righteousness and justice, which he provided at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! Christ's sovereign power is sufficient to transform the life of any sinner; Christ's sovereign power can pull any human being out of any condition. Christ Jesus has defeated Satan and bound him so he is powerless to stop the spread of the Gospel through all nations and to all people, whom God wills to be in his Kingdom. Christ Jesus is Lord over all. Salvation is available to all who believe in and follow Jesus Christ. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Christology. Since the whole Bible is about God's creation and plan of redemption in Christ, each of the other loci of systematic theology also include information about Jesus Christ. In your study of Christ, be sure to see those sections as well.

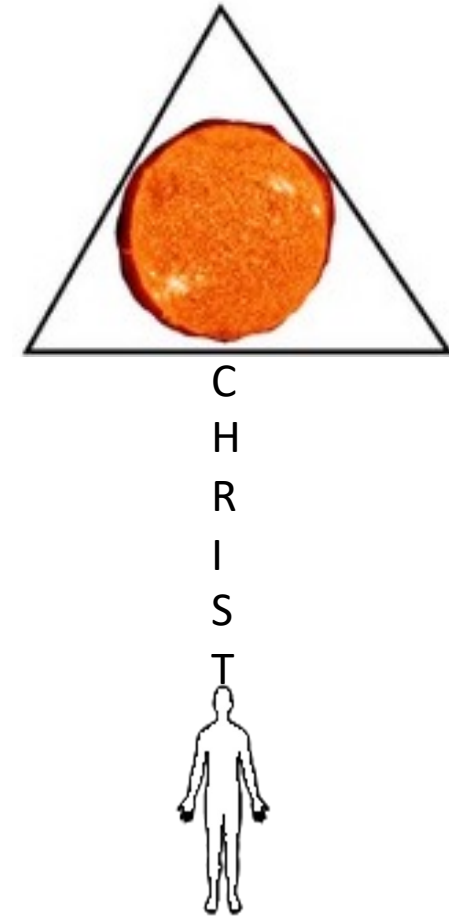
To Review: Anthropology--Who are we; what are we really like in God's sight; and what are we doing?

- God created mankind in his image and perfect.
- But humans sinned against God, disobeying his Word and his will.
- The disobedience, sin, corrupted human nature and puts a barrier between human beings and God.
- Unchanged we are unfit for, and unable to have, fellowship with God.



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

- Because of God's great love for the humans who bear his image, he did not want to destroy them/us.
- But because he is holy, holy, holy and just, he will not compromise his integrity and bring harm to people he loves by allowing unrepentant and unchanged sinful people to come into his presence and live with him and those redeemed in Christ.
- So at great cost to himself, he sent his only begotten Son to accept the punishment due to us for our sinfulness. (John 3:16)
- By Holy Spirit-generated faith in Jesus Christ (see the Soteriology section), we are credited with Christ's righteousness, and the barrier of sin that separated us from God has been removed. (Romans 4)
- The human logo clothed in white symbolizes God's cleansing of his faithful followers in Christ (Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 3:4-6; 7:13-17).

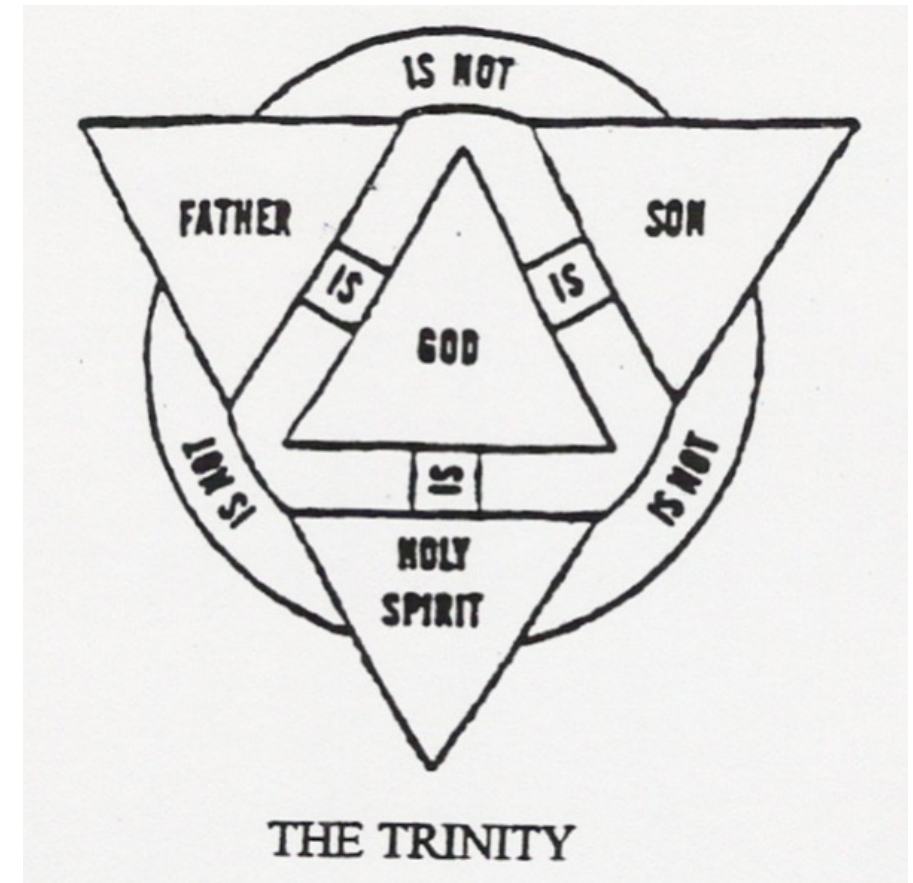


Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- In addition to symbols from the natural order, that God has built into his creation to point to him (Romans 1:20), humans have made graphic symbols to try to visualize and understand the Biblical revelation of God as being three distinct Persons who share one substance, one essence.
- Here is one ancient symbol, referred to as the shield of the Holy Trinity, that has been found in medieval stained glass. The words, usually in Latin, read logically in any direction.

The Shield of the Holy Trinity

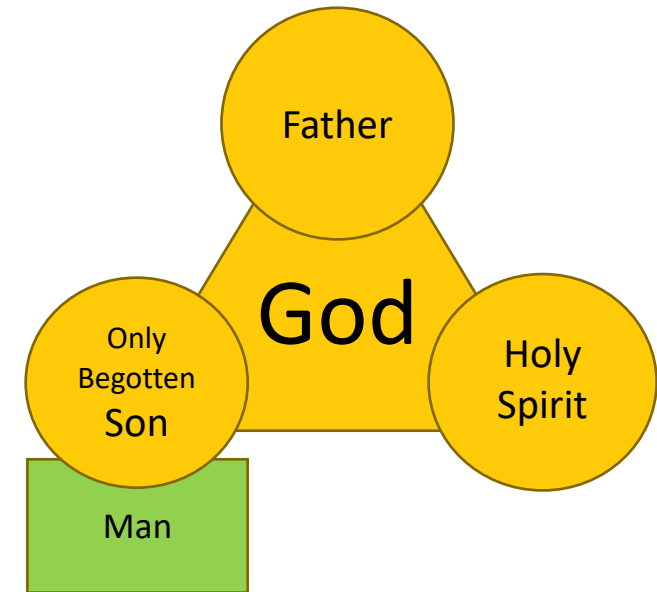


Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me [Christ], because the LORD has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor....” (Isaiah 61:1-2; See also Daniel 7:13)
- “He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
¹⁸‘The Spirit [Holy Spirit] of the Lord [Father] is on me [Christ], because he has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’
²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:16-21)
- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,…” (Matthew 28:19)
- “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Many texts in the Bible refer to all three persons in the Trinity in the same verse or passage.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- Father: He is the Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; James 1:17) and Giver of “Every good and perfect gift” of all we value and enjoy. (James 1:17)
- Only begotten Son Jesus Christ: He reconciles us with the Father. All things were created through him, by him, and for him, and in him they hold together. As Lord over all we need not fear the world going out of control. (Psalm 8:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 2:6-8; 5:5 (Greek, NASB); Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:16; Romans 3:21-26)
- Holy Spirit: He applies Christ’s redemption to us, gives us saving faith, guides us into all truth, and helps us. (1 Corinthians 12:3; John 16:13) He also regenerates us, i.e., gives us new birth (e.g., John 3:1-8), sanctification (e.g., Galatians 6:7-8), and gifts to serve (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- For more of the practical implications and applications of the doctrine of the Trinity, see the sections on Theology, Christology, and Pneumatology/Soteriology.
- For more on the Trinity specifically, see my essay, “Who is God, and what is he like? Part 1: What is the Trinity?” <https://fromacorntoak12.com/who-is-God/>.

Original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 (Cf. Mark 12:29)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃

<i>'eḥād</i>	<i>yehwāh</i>	<i>'ēlōhênû</i>	<i>yehwāh</i>	<i>yisrā'ēl</i>	<i>šəma</i> ´
one	Yahweh (LORD)	our God	Yahweh (LORD)	Israel	hear

יְהוָה (*yehwāh*), Yahweh, the LORD < אֶהְיֶה (*'ehyeh*), I AM < הָיָה (*hāyāh*), to be

- “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” (Exodus 3:14)
- “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” (John 8:58) The Jews to whom he was speaking, clearly understood that Jesus was identifying himself with God; that is why they picked up stones to kill him. (8:59)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20; cf., also Daniel 9:25-27.)
- “And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.’” (Matthew 13:57)
- “...the angel said to them...‘Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’” (Luke 2:10a,11)
- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus’ names are significant.
 - a. Jesus means Savior.
 - b. The Hebrew word Messiah means Anointed One. Messiah in Greek is Christ.
 - c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus’ divinity.

Anointing in the Bible

- 1) **Anoint** (Hebrew: מָשַׁח [māšah] and Greek: χρίω [chriō] < Χριστός [*Christos*], Christ, anointed), **Anointed One**. The Hebrew: מָשִׁיחַ (māšîaḥ < Messiah) and Greek: Χριστός (*Christos* < Christ) are translated “anointed one” in English.
 - a) To anoint refers to rubbing someone or something with a liquid usually oil to accomplish a purpose. The purpose is typically for setting apart, healing (James 5:14), or caring for one who is about to die (John 12:1-8) or has died (Mark 16:1).
 - b) In the Bible, pertaining to setting apart, a key aspect of holiness, anointing refers to an authorized applying of oil, typically olive oil, as a sign of an official appointment to an office with an accompanying indication of God’s presence and power upon the one being anointed.

Anointing in the Bible

- 2) In the Bible, this term, anointed one, is a designation that is applied to people who hold one of three specific offices, all being forerunners of and pointing to Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One (Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19; Acts 10:38), the greatest high priest, prophet, and king, who fulfills all God's plan of redemption for his whole creation.
- a. Priest (Exodus 30:30) and the high priest (Leviticus 4:3; 6:22; Hebrews 8:1-10:18)
 - b. King (1 Samuel 16:12-13; 24:6; 26:11; 2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 2:2; Matthew 27:11; John 18:37; Acts 2:29-36).
 - c. Prophet (1 Kings 19:16; 1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15; Matthew 13:57-58; 21:11; Luke 24:19; John 6:14; Acts 3:17-24)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:3)
- “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Corinthians 8:6)
- “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” (Hebrews 1:2-3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus' names are significant; they tell us who he is, his identity.
 - c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus' divinity.
 - 1) All things were created by the Father through Christ Jesus; by him, and for him, and in him they all hold together.
 - 2) Since Jesus Christ is Lord over all, we need not fear the world going out of control. (Ephesians 1:18-23)
 - 3) Jesus reconciles us with the Father and implements the Father's justice. (Romans 3:21-26)
 - 4) Here and below, we see how Jesus' question, “Who do [people...] you say I am?” (Matthew 16:13,15) is and always will be relevant and necessary.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20; cf., also Daniel 9:25-27.)
- “And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.’” (Matthew 13:57)
- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40)
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1-2)
- See also Revelation 1:8; 21:1; and 22:13. (R. C. H. Lenski, *et al.*: All three passages are spoken by Christ Jesus about himself.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus’ names are significant.
 - a. Jesus means Savior.
 - b. The Hebrew word Messiah means Anointed One. Messiah in Greek is Christ.
 - c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus’ divinity. Only begotten Son (*op cit.*) especially clearly designates Jesus’ divinity. (John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)
 - d. Son of man (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 12:40) signifies Jesus’ human nature.
 - e. Thus, Christ Jesus is the Second Person of the triune God, the Trinity.
 - f. The Word (John 1:1ff.) With Lenski, “...we may define the Logos-title: the Logos [Word] is the final and absolute revelation of God, embodied in God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization.” (P. 30) John 1:1ff. Is another strong statement of Jesus’ divinity. John 1:14 refers to Jesus’ also being human: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

A Very Important Aspect of Learning and Wisdom

In all of life, and especially in the most important matters of life and eternity, look for relationships, implications and applications. For example, when considering the Bible's teaching about God being holy, indeed that he is most holy, in Hebrew terminology, holy, holy, holy, look for what that means in many related aspects of life. Ask, "What does God's being most holy mean for how I treat other people whom he also loves and who bear his image?"

To help us make those connections, most of the PowerPoint slides in this course will have two columns:

Doctrinal Subject

Biblical basis, texts

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Implications and applications

As you read and study, think about connections and inferences. This course is designed to help us do so.

Original Hebrew of Genesis 1:1

1.1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

hā'āreṣ wě'ēt haššāmayim ēt 'ēlōhîm bārā' bĕrē'sît

the earth and the heavens * God created In the beginning

* A primary particle indicating the accusative case (grammatical case that marks the direct objective of the verb) in Hebrew and is not translated.

The Hebrew text, not the transliteration or the translation, is from [The Lexham Hebrew Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Note the Parallel with Genesis 1:1 in the Original Greek of John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning **was** the Word, and the Word **was** with (the)* God, and God **was** the Word.

ἦν (ēn) – The parts of the Greek verb reveal very important information to enable us to understand God’s Word.

- Indicative Mood: Denotes an act or state as an objective fact.
- Imperfect Tense: Denotes continued action in past time. NOT one and done.
- Active Voice: Represents the subject of the verb as doing the acting, not acted upon.

* In the original Greek syntax, the definite article, “the,” when occurring with God, is not translated.

[Complete Biblical Library Interlinear Bible: New Testament](#) (Bellingham, WA: WORDsearch, 2013), John 1:1.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (the)* God, and God was the Word.

Even the earliest readers of John must have recognized “the resemblance between the first phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ, “in the beginning,” and that with which Moses begins Genesis. This parallel with Moses was, no doubt, intentional on John’s part...in John’s first sentence the emphasis is on this phrase “in the beginning” and not on the subject “the Word.” This means that John is not answering the question, “*Who* was in the beginning?” to which the answer would naturally be, “God”; but the question, “*Since when* was the Logos?” the answer to which is, “Since all eternity.” This is why John has the verb ἦν, “was,” the durative imperfect, which reaches back indefinitely beyond the instant of the beginning. [How exciting to know this reality! Think of the implications! Start with Jesus.]

* In the original Greek syntax, the definite article, “the,” when occurring with God, is not translated.
R. C. H. Lenski, [*The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), pp. 25-27.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

We, of course, must say that the idea of eternity excludes all notions of tense, present, past, and future; for eternity is not time, even vast time, in any sense but the absolute opposite of time—timelessness. Thus, strictly speaking, there is nothing prior to “the beginning,” and no duration or durative tense in eternity. In other words, human language has no forms of expression that fit the conditions of the eternal world. Our minds are chained to the concepts of time. Of necessity, then, when anything in eternity is presented to us, it must be by such imperfect means as our minds and our language afford. That is why the durative idea in the imperfect tense ἦν is superior to the punctiliar aoristic [past tense] idea: In the beginning the Logos... “was” in eternal existence. All else had a beginning, “became,” ἐγένετο, was created; not the Logos. This—may we call it—timeless ἦν in John’s first sentence utterly refutes the doctrine of Arius [as does the Nicene Creed], which he summed up in the formula: ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, “there was (a time) when he (the Son) was not.” The eternity of the Logos is co-equal with that of the Father.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

“...we may define the Logos-title: the Logos is the final and absolute revelation of God, embodied in God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization....The Logos is, indeed, spoken, but he also speaks.”*

[John 1:1ff. Is another strong statement of Jesus’ divinity. John 1:14 refers to Jesus’ also being human: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” Thus, in the same chapter we observe God’s revelation that his only begotten Son is both fully divine and fully human.]

*R. C. H. Lenski, p. 30.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

This opens up the wealth of the Old Testament references to the Logos. “And God *said*, Let there be light,” Gen. 1:4. “And God *said*, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness,” Gen. 1:26. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by *the word of God*,” Heb. 11:3. “*By the word of the Lord* were the heavens made.... For he *spake*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast,” Ps. 33:6 and 9. “He sent his word,” Ps. 107:20; 147:15.... In these words and commands the Son stands revealed in his omnipotent and creative power, even as John says in v. 3: “All things were made by him.” This active, omnipotent revelation “in the beginning” reveals him as the Logos from all eternity, one with the Father and the Spirit and yet another, namely the Son.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

...“Logos” is a *personal* name, the name of him “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,” Micah 5:2. And so we define once more, in the words of Besser, “The Word is the living God as he reveals himself, Isa. 8:22; Heb. 1:1, 2.”

...the Son is “the brightness of his (the Father’s) glory, and the express image of his person,” Heb. 1:3. Only of Jesus as the Logos is the word true, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” John 16:9; and that other word, “I and my Father are one,” John 10:30. (Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4)

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

And the Word was with God, πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Here we note the first Hebrew trait in John's Greek, a simple coordination with καί, "and," followed in a moment by a second. The three coordinate statements in v. 1 stand side by side, and each of the three repeats the mighty subject, "the Word." Three times, too, John writes the identical verb ἦν, its sense being as constant as that of the subject: the Logos "was" in all eternity, "was" in an unchanging, timeless existence. In the first statement the phrase "in the beginning" is placed forward for emphasis; in the second statement the phrase "with God" is placed at the end for [how the Greek indicates] emphasis.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

In the Greek Θεός [God] may or may not have the article, for the word is much like a proper noun, and in the Greek this may be articulated, a usage which the English does not have. Cases in which the presence or the absence of the article bears a significance we shall note as we proceed. The preposition πρὸς, as distinct from ἐν, παρά, and σύν, is of the greatest importance. R. [A. T. Robertson] 623 attempts to render its literal force by translating: “face to face with God.” He adds 625 that πρὸς is employed “for living relationship, intimate converse,” which well describes its use in this case. The idea is that of presence and communion with a strong note of reciprocity. The Logos [Word], then, is not an attribute inhering in God, or a power emanating from him, but a person in the presence of God and turned in loving, inseparable communion toward God, and God turned equally toward him. He was another and yet not other than God. This preposition πρὸς sheds light on Gen. 1:26, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.”

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

Now comes the third statement: **And the Word was God.** In English we place the predicate last, while in the Greek it is placed first in order to receive the fullest emphasis. Here Θεός must omit the article thus making sure that we read it as the predicate and not as the subject, R. 791. “‘The Word was with God.’ This sounds, speaking according to our reason, as though the Word was something different from God. So he turns about, closes the circle, and says, ‘And God was the Word.’” Luther. *God* is the Word, God himself, fully, completely, without diminution, in very essence. What the first statement necessarily involves when it declares that already in the beginning the Word was; what the second statement clearly involves when it declares the eternal reciprocal relation between the Word and God—that is declared with simple directness in the third statement when the Word is pronounced God with no modifier making a subtraction or limitation. And now all is clear; we now see how this Word who is God “was in the beginning,” and how this Word who is God was in eternal reciprocal relation with God. This clarity is made perfect when the three ἦν are seen to be eternal, shutting out absolutely a past that in any way is limited. The Logos is one of the three divine persons of the eternal Godhead.

A Very Important Aspect of Learning and Wisdom

In all of life, and especially in the most important matters of life and eternity, look for relationships, implications and applications. For example, when considering the Bible's teaching about God being holy, indeed that he is most holy, in Hebrew terminology, holy, holy, holy, look for what that means in many related aspects of life. Ask, "What does God's being most holy mean for how I treat other people whom he also loves and who bear his image?"

To help us make those connections, most of the PowerPoint slides in this course will have two columns:

Doctrinal Subject

Biblical basis, texts

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Implications and applications

As you read and study, think about connections and inferences. This course is designed to help us do so.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20; cf., also Daniel 9:25-27.)
- “And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.’” (Matthew 13:57)
- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40)
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1-2)
- See also Revelation 1:8; 21:1; and 22:13. (R. C. H. Lenski, *et al.*: All three passages are spoken by Christ Jesus about himself.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus’ names are significant.
 - a. Jesus means Savior.
 - b. The Hebrew word Messiah means Anointed One. Messiah in Greek is Christ.
 - c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus’ divinity. Only begotten Son (*op cit.*) especially clearly designates Jesus’ divinity. (John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)
 - d. Son of man (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 12:40) signifies Jesus’ human nature.
 - e. Thus, Christ Jesus is the Second Person of the triune God, the Trinity.
 - f. The Word (John 1:1ff.) With Lenski, “...we may define the Logos-title: the Logos [Word] is the final and absolute revelation of God, embodied in God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization.” (P. 30) John 1:1ff. Is another strong statement of Jesus’ divinity. John 1:14 refers to Jesus’ also being human: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,” (Isaiah 61:1)
- “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,” (Luke 4:18)
- “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)
- “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus’ names are significant.
 - g. He has three official titles—three offices.
 - 1) **Prophet** (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19) refers to his speaking the Word and will of God about our redemption in the two modes prophets did.
 - a) Forthtelling, i.e., pointing out wrongdoing and
 - b) Foretelling, i.e., predicting the coming judgment on the wrongdoing. (Deut. 18:15-22)
 - 2) **Priest** (Hebrews 3:1; 4:4; 10; John 1:29) refers to his offering the perfect once for all sacrifice of his body for our sins (Hebrews 9:12,28) and his continually interceding for us with the Father (e.g., John 17; Romans 8:34).
 - 3) **King** (Luke 1:32-33; Isaiah 9:7; 44:6) refers to his ruling all things (1 Corinthians 15:27), by his Word and Spirit, including in the minds and hearts of all who believe in and follow him, as well as defending and sustaining us in our redemption.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)
- “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)
- “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)
- “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)
- “Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” (John 14:10-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
 - a. **Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6) See Soteriology, mystical union, the spiritual union with Christ.**
 - b. **Jesus came to give his life, to die for us. (Mark 10:45)**
 - c. **Jesus came to reveal the Father and reconcile humans with God. (John 14:10-11)**
 - d. Jesus came to redeem us, to take our sin upon himself. (Hebrews 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:24) Redemption involves paying a ransom; (Mark 10:45) Jesus paid for us with his life with huge pain and suffering.
 - e. Jesus came to be the one mediator between God and humans. (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 9:15)
 - f. Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Hebrews 2:16-18)
- “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:29)
- “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)
- “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
 - a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6)
 - b. Jesus came to give his life, to die for us. (Mark 10:45)
 - c. Jesus came to reveal the Father and reconcile humans with God. (John 14:10-11)
 - d. **Jesus came to redeem us, to take our sin upon himself. (Hebrews 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:24) Redemption involves paying a ransom; (Mark 10:45) Jesus paid for us with his life with huge pain and suffering.**
 - e. Jesus came to be the one mediator between God and humans. (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 9:15)
 - f. Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)
- “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [human priests] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.” (Hebrews 8:6)
- “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant [the first covenant of grace with Abraham, renewed with Moses].” (Hebrews 9:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
 - a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6)
 - b. Jesus came to give his life, to die for us. (Mark 10:45)
 - c. Jesus came to reveal the Father and reconcile humans with God. (John 14:10-11)
 - d. Jesus came to redeem us, to take our sin upon himself. (Hebrews 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:24)
Redemption involves paying a ransom; (Mark 10:45) Jesus paid for us with his life with huge pain and suffering.
 - e. **Jesus came to be the one mediator between God and humans. (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15)**
 - f. Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

...Christ as the “Mediator” of the better testament [covenant] which is now called “new,” [καινός (*kainos*), i.e., new in nature or in quality], namely the old Abrahamitic testament in the newness which Christ gave it. The abolished testament, which is here [also 8:6] called “the first,” is that which was brought down from the Mount by Moses 430 years after Abraham; under this Mosaic testament Israel failed to inherit. This testament promised Canaan, but Israel lost it forever because of transgressions. In what way Christ is the “Mediator” of this renewed Abrahamitic and thus “new” testament, which is so much better than the one Moses brought, is stated in the genitive [case] absolute: “a death having occurred for ransoming from the transgressions at the time of the first testament.” Christ’s *death* made him “Mediator of a new testament.” The mediation consisted in this, that his death put the testament in force; it was the medium for that. After he had died, the testamentary inheritance could be paid out to the heirs. The genitive absolute has causal force: “since his death occurred” (historical aorist [tense]).

This was not an ordinary death as we have seen in connection with v. 12 and elsewhere in this epistle. Christ did not merely die of this or of that, in an ordinary way. This was an expiatory death for the object (εἰς [for]) of ransoming (ἀπολύτρωσις [*apolutrōsis*, redemption]) from the transgressions (objective genitive) at the time (ἐπί [under], temporal, B.-P. 447, item 2) of the first testament. We have the same objective genitive in καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, “cleansing *from* the sins” (1:3). On ransoming note what is said about λύτρωσις [*lutrōsis*, redemption] in v. 12.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

Christ's death put the testament in force because his death paid the full and complete ransom. It canceled even all the sins that had been committed by Israel in the past, the very sins which lost Israel the Mosaic testamentary promises and its land of Canaan. These old transgressions, which accumulated throughout the entire period of the Mosaic testament, are mentioned because the two testaments and the two kinds of death and of blood are contrasted. There is no thought of limiting the sins for which Christ died. The writer is addressing former Jews and is indicating to them what the Mosaic testament failed to accomplish for them, and what the new testament and its Mediator did accomplish for them.

Much of the exposition of 8:6–13 applies also here, in particular what we have said on v. 12, as to how during the period of the old testament the true believers were saved from their sins. The Old Testament believers were saved by means of the Abrahamic testament and by means of all that was typical of Christ in the Mosaic testament; but, of course, only on the strength of this death of Christ, which had to occur in the fulness of time as it did occur. The Mosaic testament and all its law came in “because of transgression” (Gal. 3:19) in order the more to drive Israel to the promise that had been given to Abraham in the testament and had been conserved in all the types of Christ in the ceremonial features of the Mosaic testament.

The entire past, the entire present, the entire future thus rest on the death that occurred on Calvary, on the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. 13:8. The Messiah who died is the absolute necessity no matter in which direction we look. Without him as “Mediator of a new testament” all that God gave to Abraham and then to Moses and Israel would be a hollow mockery. Without him there would be no “eternal inheritance,” no people called to receive it. Absolutely everything hinges on this Mediator and the mediation of his bloody, sacrificial, expiatory death. [Expiation = extinguishing guilt]

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

“Because of this is he Mediator, etc., that they who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance,” may indeed and in fact receive it (not “might,” A. V.). The aorist [tense] denotes actuality and does not refer to a certain time; it applies to all time. The perfect tense οἱ κεκλημένοι [*ohi keklēmenoi*], “those having been called,” denotes state, an enduring condition and no more. It, too, applies to all time; it should not be dated in the past and referred only to the Israelites who were called during past ages. Nor does the writer intend to say that those who were called in *past* ages shall *now* receive the eternal inheritance; that they have been dead for a long time and have been without the inheritance during that entire time. The tenses will not permit this interpretation.

“The promise of the eternal inheritance” is the actual fulfillment, the substance promised. The genitive [case] is appositional: the inheritance is the thing promised, i.e., “the good things” mentioned in v. 11. The writer uses “eternal” three times and in a way that is marked: “*eternal* ransoming” obtained by Christ (v. 12), “by means of (his) *eternal* spirit” (v. 14), we are to receive “the promise of the *eternal* inheritance.” This is intentional on the part of the writer and should not be regarded as an accidental use of the same word “eternal.”

The call is always extended by God’s gospel grace, and throughout the epistles, whether it is expressed by a noun, a verb, a participle, or a verbal adjective, the writers invariably have in mind the successful [effectual] call. The perfect participle here describes the called as being in an enduring state. They are the heirs named in the testament. Whether they lived in the past, are living now, or shall live in future ages is not indicated by the tense. One by one, as they leave this life, they receive the eternal inheritance of which the call makes them the heirs. In this life they have the earnest or pledge of their inheritance, namely the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13, 14), and thus taste of the powers of the world to come already in this life (Heb. 6:5), and then, if they remain true to their call by faith, at death receive the inheritance in heaven. Note how “testament” and “inheritance” correspond. [See also the sections on “Calling” and “Perseverance of the saints” in the doctrine of Soteriology.]

Lenski, R. C. H. (1938). [The interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James](#) (pp. 302–305). Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)
- “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:15)
- “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
 - a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6)
 - b. Jesus came to give his life; to die for us. (Mark 10:45)
 - c. Jesus came to reveal the Father and to reconcile humans with God. (John 14:10-11)
 - d. Jesus came to redeem us, to take our sin upon himself (Hebrews 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:24) Redemption involves paying a ransom; (Mark 10:45) Jesus paid for us with his life with huge pain and suffering.
 - e. Jesus came to be the one mediator between God and humans. (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6; 9:15)
 - f. **Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)**

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)
- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “Jesus the Son of God...who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15; cf., 7:27; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5)
- “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:14-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. Understand and explain these aspects of Jesus’ Birth.
 - a. Jesus was born of a virgin who was made to conceive by the Holy Spirit so he would be both human and divine. (Luke 1:35)
 - b. The Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated, i.e., he took on a human body and human spirit, while retaining his divinity. (See the above graphic.)
 - c. Jesus’ birth is characterized by humility, which is seen
 - 1) in the circumstances of his birth to humble parents in an unprivileged and disrespected locale, rather than in a royal setting;
 - 2) by coming into a world of sin; and
 - 3) by taking on our human nature, especially the body of which was (and still is) devalued, e.g., by those espousing a Gnostic philosophy and related worldviews. (See above, Anthropology.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)
- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:35)
- “Jesus the Son of God...who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15; cf., 7:27; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5)
- “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:14-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. Understand and explain these aspects of Jesus’ Birth.
 - d. Though Jesus was made fully human in order to be able to fulfill God’s law for us in our stead, since we are unable to do so, the Holy Spirit and Christ’s divinity enabled Jesus to be and remain a sinless human, which he had to be in order to make a vicarious reparation, expiation (overcoming of evil and extinguishing of guilt), and restitution for us, ransoming, redeeming, us from our sins. Cf. Romans 5:12-21.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.
⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” (Colossians 2:8-10)
- “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:28-29)
- “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [NASB, KJV: propitiation] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. Jesus Has Two Natures, Divine and Human. As a linguist, I don't like to use the word nature with God or divine, since the root of nature is from the Latin, *natus*, to be born, and God was never born, he has always existed (e.g., Psalm 90:2). Yet as a theologian, I use the word nature, since it is used in the theological literature to refer both to Jesus' divine and human being, and since in common usage, people do not think of the word nature as referring to being born but rather to one's, especially here, Jesus', essential being. Nevertheless, it's an important distinction to make.
 - a. Divine—Christ's divine nature enabled and guided him to overcome temptation and not sin. See more also in the section on Jesus' human nature.
 - 1) His divinity preserves his human perfection, which is required for him to make propitiation, atonement, satisfaction for our sins.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” (Colossians 2:8-10)

- “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (Matthew 7:28-29)
- “Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:58 NASB)
- “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (John 17:5)
- “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” (John 14:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. Jesus Has Two Natures, Divine and Human.
 - a. Explain these aspects of his divine nature.
 - 2) Jesus’ divinity is clearly indicated in his miracles and in what he said in John 8:58 and in 17:5.
 - 3) Jesus demonstrated a unique authority readily perceived by the people who observed him.
 - a) His authority came directly from his divine being (as the Second Person of the triune God).
 - b) My authority as a teacher of God’s Word is derived from
 - 1- the Lord (his call) and
 - 2- the church
 - a- who verified the call,
 - b- who ordained me,
 - c- and to whom I’m accountable (more about this in part five—the fifth of the six loci—on the church).

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

John 3:16

Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν,
Houtōs *gar ēgarpēsen ho theos ton kosmon hōste ton huion ton monogenē edōken,*
thus For loved [the]* God the world, that the Son the only begotten he gave

ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
hina pas ho pisteuōn eis auton mē apolētai, all' echē zōēn aiōnion.
that everyone the believing in him not may perish, but may have life eternal.
[who believes]

* In Greek grammar in such contexts, the definite article is not translated into English, but consider the implications of the Greek text. We do only have one real, true, and authentic God.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life,” (John 3:16, NASB)
- ““You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;...’ (Hebrews 5:5 Greek, NRSV; Psalm 2:7 Hebrew, LXX [Greek translation], NRSV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 4) In John 3:16, the term “only begotten” translates the Greek word, *μονογενής* (*monogenēs*), meaning the only one of the same essence as God, clearly indicating Jesus Christ’s divinity.
 - a) That there is only one God, is also communicated by the Greek of this and many other passages by the inclusion of the definite article, which sadly is not typically translated in English versions: the God gave his only begotten Son.
 - b) Biblical scholars are not all in agreement as to the proper translation of *monogenēs*, but having studied the different viewpoints, I opt for the traditional “only begotten.” To avoid unnecessary technicality and to maintain the purpose of this overview of systematic theology, I refer any who wish for more information to consult the excellent commentary by the outstanding Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski on John 3:16 and the related passages.

Understanding Bible Translation

This information about John 3:16 is an illustration of the philosophy and practice of Bible translation of which all people need to be aware. Bible translators try very hard to produce a version of the Bible in a given language that readers can understand in their own vernacular. However, in so doing, they occasionally choose words in the contemporary language that do not communicate the totality of what God is saying in that text, such as “only Son” or even “one and only Son” for *monogenēs*, only begotten.

Translators must keep in mind that in that work they are translators not teachers. God has given them the gift of learning the original languages of the Bible, and he has called them to translate his Word into a particular contemporary language. He has given to others the gift of teaching (Ephesians 4:11ff.). It is the teachers' responsibility to explain the meaning of the Scripture texts. Recall the account of the Apostle Philip and the Ethiopian official. “²⁹The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’ ³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ³¹‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him...³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.” (Acts 8:29-31,35; Nehemiah 8:8,12)

Some translators may also have the gift of teaching, but when they are doing their translating, they should not try to teach within their translation of the text. Furthermore, translators have no authority to change the words the Holy Spirit gave to the prophets and apostles to write, e.g., in John 3:16. Translators translate; teachers teach. Included in that teaching is what the words mean and their implications and applications.

Understanding Bible Translation

Basically, translators have two main philosophical orientations to their work. One is a literal word-for-word approach, as much as possible, such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the King James Bible (KJV). The other orientation is referred to as dynamic equivalency, or the attempt to choose several words in contemporary colloquial terms to convey the original Bible words.

So, what does this mean for individual reading of the Bible when one has no teacher sitting beside him or her? This is why it is important for readers to use at least two translations of the Bible in order to understand God's Word.

(1) Choose a version of the Bible that is easy to read, possibly one of the dynamic equivalency versions, such as the NIV. (2) Choose a version that has been translated in a literal manner that accurately conveys the exact meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek word (e.g., *monogenēs*, only begotten). Use the literal translation to obtain a more accurate rendering and understanding of a specific text.

A good commentary is also very helpful. One-volume commentaries on the whole Bible, and commentaries on specific books of the Bible, are valuable. Some study Bibles, which contain the whole Bible and explanatory footnotes, such as the *NIV Study Bible*, offer much commentary on most of the verses in each chapter. Be careful in selecting such teaching aids—not all commentators are theologically and Biblically sound. Those mentioned herein are trustworthy.

It is especially important to regularly attend God's corporate worship with a church congregation that faithfully proclaims and expounds his Word. Also participate in the church's learning opportunities, e.g., classes, seminars, and Bible study groups. (Cf. Hebrews 10:25; Ephesians 4:11-17; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Nehemiah 8:1-18, esp. 8,12.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life,” (John 3:16, NASB)
- “‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’;...’ (Hebrews 5:5 Greek, NRSV; Psalm 2:7 Hebrew, LXX [Greek translation], NRSV)
- “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [NASB, KJV: propitiation] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- 5) The Greek word κόσμος (*kosmos*), especially in John, means the world in its present fallen state, not just the beautiful aspects of the universe. Thus, God is revealing that he loves his creation so much that he wants to redeem it, and in the process obliterate all its sinfulness and evil. In order to do so and yet maintain his justice, he sends his only begotten Son to make the redemption and at such great cost to himself: What supreme love! Again, we see the answer to the theodicy question.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’” (Genesis 2:15-17)
- “Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the LORD.” (Leviticus 3:1 NASB)
- “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.” (Leviticus 17:11)
- “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:17 NASB)
- “God made him [Christ, v. 20] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (Cf. Hebrews 4:15; 9:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- b. Human—Jesus’ human nature enables him to represent us.
 - 1) His humanity is necessary, for it was humans who disobeyed and sinned against God’s command and will, not animals. Thus, a human must make reparation for human sin, but it can only be a perfect human, one without defect, in order to qualify us for being in God’s most holy presence.
 - 2) Animal sacrifice in the Old Testament was a temporary teaching aid to help God’s people understand the concept of vicarious, or substitutionary, atonement, a perfect one without defect, dying in the place of another to provide propitiation, reconciliation with God who is Most Holy and will not allow sin in his presence, in preparation for the coming of the promised Anointed One, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, whose sacrifice would be “once for all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 5:12-21; Hebrews 7:27; 9:26-27)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Over the centuries, Christian theologians have considered the question, “Could Jesus have sinned?” We read in Hebrews 2:17 that Jesus had to be made like us in all things, so that he might represent us and make propitiation for our sins, which means that his human nature, as ours, bears the image of God, including a genuine freedom (*op cit.*) that includes the ability and the responsibility to choose to obey God’s will. [R. C. Sproul answers the question well](#) (accessed 08/23/2022) and explains more.

“I believe that since Jesus was fully human, it was possible for him to sin. Obviously, the divine nature cannot sin. But if Christ's divine nature prevented him from sinning, in what sense did he obey the law of God as the second Adam? At his birth, Jesus' human nature was exactly the same as Adam's before the fall, with respect to his moral *capabilities*. [Emphasis mine.] Jesus had what Augustine called the *posse peccare* and the *posse non peccare*, that is, the ability to sin and the ability not to sin. Adam sinned; Jesus did not. Satan did everything in his power to corrupt Jesus and tempt him to sin. That would have been an exercise in futility had he been trying to tempt a divine person to sin. Satan was not trying to get God to sin. He was trying to get the human nature of Christ to sin, so that he would not be qualified to be the Savior.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

“At the same time, Christ was uniquely sanctified and ministered to by the Holy Spirit. In order to sin, a person must have a desire for sin. But Jesus' human nature throughout his life was marked by a zeal for righteousness. ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me’ ([John 4:34](#)), he said. As long as Jesus had no desire to sin, he would not sin. I may be wrong, but I think it is wrong to believe that Christ's divine nature made it impossible for his human nature to sin. If that were the case, the temptation, the tests, and his assuming of the responsibility of the first Adam would have all been charades. This position protects the integrity of the authenticity of the human nature because it was the human nature that carried out the mission of the second Adam on our behalf. It was the human nature uniquely anointed beyond measure by the Holy Spirit.”

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation (χαράκτηρ [*charaktēr*], reproduction, exact likeness) of his being (ὑποστάσεως < ὑποστασις [*hupostasis*], substance, underlying essence), sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” (Hebrews 1:3)
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)
- “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:9)
- “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- c. Jesus’ divine and human natures are distinct but united.
 - 1) The two natures, human and divine, of Jesus Christ are an essential unity, as are the three Persons of the Trinity. See also the discussion of the hypostatic union in the earlier section on Theology.
 - 2) The Greek word, *hupostasis*, in Hebrews 1:3 also means actual being, reality, subsistence, substantial nature.
 - 3) Jesus’ divinity is also seen in John 1:1; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3 and in other texts of the Bible.

The Unity of the Person of Christ, Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 184-185

Louis Berkhof has well explained this central doctrine of historic Christian theology. Consider this excerpt.

“While the Church has maintained the doctrine of the two natures of Christ from the days of the Council of Chalcedon [451 A.D.], it at the same time asserted the existence of these two natures in one person.

1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO NATURES IN ONE PERSON. There is but one person in the Mediator, and that person is the unchangeable Son of God. In the incarnation He did not change into a human person, nor did He adopt a human person; He simply assumed a human nature, which did not develop into an independent personality, but became personal in the person of the Son of God. The one divine person, who possessed a divine nature from eternity, assumed a human nature and now has both. After this assumption of a human nature the person of the Mediator is not divine only but divine-human; He is now the God-man. He is a single individual, but possesses all the essential qualities of both the human and the divine nature. While He has but a single self-consciousness, He has both a divine and a human consciousness, as well as a divine and a human will, [both always in perfect harmony].
2. SCRIPTURE PROOF FOR THE UNITY OF THE PERSON IN CHRIST. If there were a dual personality in Christ, we would naturally expect to find some traces of it in the Bible; but there is not a single trace of it. It is always the same person who speaks, whether the consciousness that finds utterance be human or divine, cf. John 10:30; 17:5 as compared with Matt. 27:46, John 19:28. There is no interchange of “I” and “thou” between the human and the divine natures, such as there is between the persons in the Trinity (cf. John 17:23). Human attributes and actions are sometimes ascribed to the person designated by a divine title, Acts 20:28; I Cor. 2:8; Col. 1:13, 14. On the other hand divine attributes and actions are ascribed to the person designated by a human title, John 3:13; 6:62; Rom. 9:5.”

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:5-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. Christ Experienced Two States, Humiliation and Exaltation. This doctrine was developed in the 17th century. The Humiliation of Christ consists in his putting aside (but not that he ceased to have or that he gave up) his divine attributes and majesty in which he is the sovereign ruler of the universe (in the sense that is in the Greek, he did not consider his equality with God a prize for display), and in his taking on human nature in the form of a servant, becoming subject to the demands and curse of the law.
 - a. His humiliation began with his birth.
 - 1) In leaving his heavenly glory, he began the painful work necessary to redeem us human beings whom he loves and who bear his image.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” (John 1:11)
- “‘But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.’ Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.” (Matthew 26:56)
- “When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate asked him, ‘Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?’ ¹⁴But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.” (Matthew 27:12-14)
- “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.” (Matthew 26:59-60a)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The Humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo.
 - 2) Christ's suffering is an essential part of his humiliation.
 - a) He was rejected by his people. (E.g., John 1:11)
 - b) He was rejected by his disciples. (E.g., Matthew 26:56)
 - c) He silently bore reproach and rejected defense. (E.g., Matthew 27:12-14)
 - d) He experienced illegal condemnation and sentencing. (E.g., Matthew 26:59-60a)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹But they kept shouting, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ ²²For the third time he spoke to them: ‘Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.’ ²³But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.” (Luke 23:20-25)
- “[Pilate] had Jesus flogged....Then ²⁸They stripped him..., ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him,...they led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 27:26-31)
- “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.” (Matthew 27:50)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

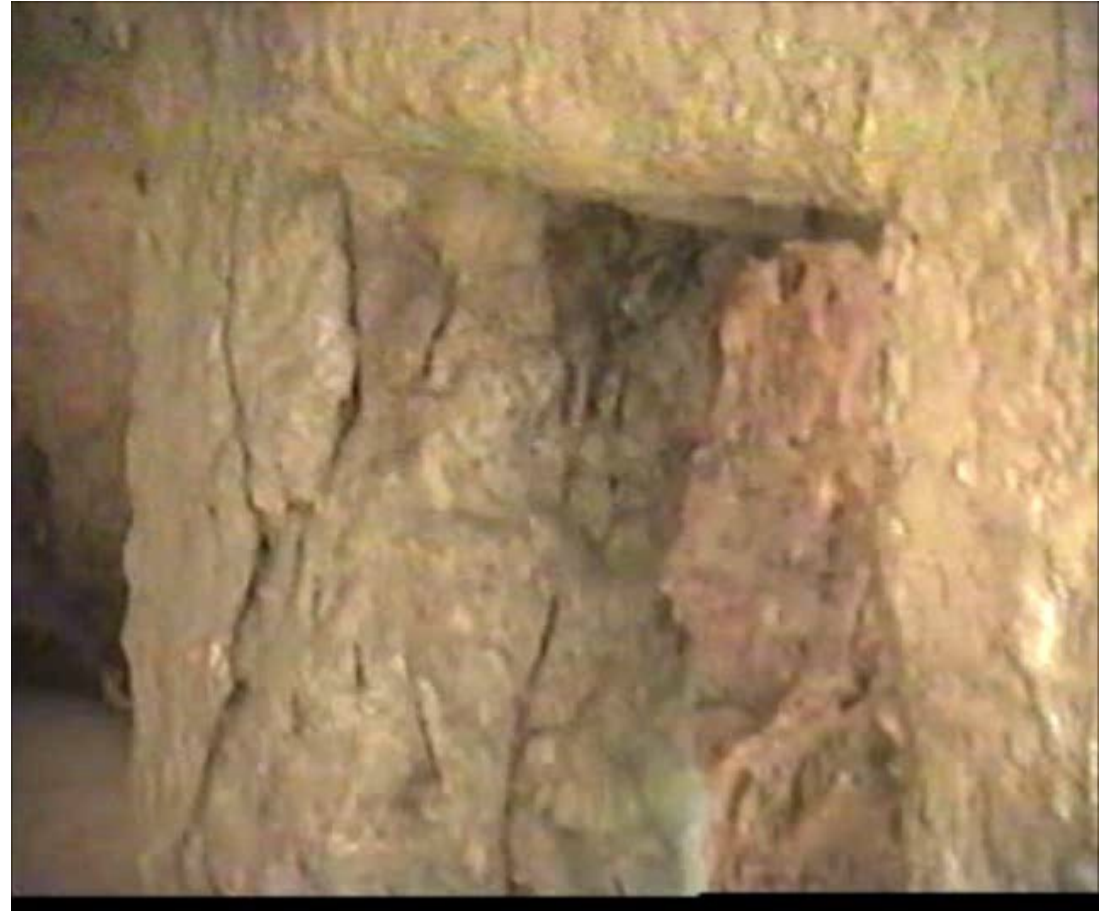
5. a. The Humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo.
 - 2) Christ’s suffering is an essential part of his humiliation.
 - d) He experienced illegal condemnation and sentencing. (E.g., Luke 23:20-25; Matthew 27:19-26)
 - e) Jesus’ suffered greatly in his death in the severity of flogging, repeatedly striking the crown of thorns on his head, in his being mocked, and in his excruciating crucifixion. (E.g., Mark 15:16-20; Matthew 27:11-26; 50)

Christology: Jesus' Suffering in Our Place

Excavations at the site of the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, now located under the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu (Cock-Crow), show some of what Jewish flogging involved. But Jesus was flogged much more viciously by the Romans. (Mark 15:15)

Click here to see video:

<https://youtu.be/LIZc3GmFX8Q>



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “[Abraham’s] faith was made complete by what he did...a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone...As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:22, 24,26) Cf. Matthew 7:15-23; John 14:21; 15:9-10)
- “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (**Romans 6:23**)
- “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13)
- “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)
- “who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” (Galatians 1:4)
- “so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo for us.
 - 3) The Death of Jesus: Sufficient for all, but not efficient for all—efficient only for true believers in and doers of his commands. The true faith which saves issues forth in good deeds, fruitfulness. God’s Word condemns hypocrisy. (Cf. e.g., Matthew 15:1-11; 23)
 - 4) Sin brings the curse of God upon humans. (**Romans 6:23**)
 - 5) Christ took the curse of the punishment due to our sin upon himself—substituting himself for us. (Matthew 27:46; cf. curses in the third, ratification, section of the old covenant in Anthropology.)
 - 6) Christ is the Great High Priest.
 - a) As priest he was the offeror of the great sacrifice for our sins.
 - b) As priest he was the offering; he offered himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)
- “As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. (Matthew 27:57-61)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo for us.
 - 7) Jesus' burial was also a necessary part of his humiliation.
 - a) This testimony affirms his death and the accomplishment of the work he came to do.
 - b) If Jesus did not die on the cross, as some assert, then we would still be contaminated with the guilt of our sins and would not have salvation.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” Now I have told you.’” (Matthew 28:5-7)
- “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

[The empty tomb is the chief answer for the rival hypotheses to the Biblical account of Jesus’ Resurrection. (Matthew 27:57-28:15)]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 1) Jesus’ Resurrection is the seal of his work.
 - a) Jesus’ resurrection is visible evidence that:
 - 1- He defeated death. (John 11:25-27; Ephesians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58)
 - 2- He defeated Satan. (E.g., Luke 10:18-19)
 - b) Jesus is the first human ever resurrected. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Pictured below is a first century A. D. tomb outside Megiddo.



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Matthew 16:21)
- “Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, ‘The man who does these things will live by them.’¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” (Galatians 3:6–14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 1) Jesus’ Resurrection is the seal of his work.
 - b) Jesus is the first human being ever resurrected. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Others, e.g., Lazarus (John 11:1-44; see esp. 23-27), have been raised from the dead, but they were not resurrected; i.e., they still had their earthly bodies, not resurrection bodies, and they later died at the end of their lives.
 - c) Humans who believe in Christ are free from the curse of the Law. (Galatians 3:1-14)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” Now I have told you.’” (Matthew 28:5-7)
- “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

[No one could find Jesus’ dead body after Sunday morning when he was resurrected. And, you can be sure they tried! (See Matthew 28:11-15.)]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 1) Jesus’ Resurrection is the seal of his work.
 - d) We are justified by our faith in Christ. (Romans 4:23-25; 5:1)
 - e) Our view of life is changed. (Romans 12:1-5)
 - f) Our basis for hope: Christ Jesus is the first resurrection person and the first fruits of the resurrection in which all believers will share. (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-58)

**Recall the overall theme of the Bible:
Creation, Fall, Redemption, and
Consummation in and through Jesus Christ.**

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Creation

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’
²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
²⁸God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26-28)

*As we considered earlier in this course, three overarching themes throughout the Bible are: **creation**, **fall**, and **redemption**. The six loci of historic Christian systematic theology further explain those three themes. In his famous painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, Michelangelo portrays the perfect relationship that man had with God at first, when God created him; nothing separated us from God.*

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Creation

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’
²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
²⁸God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26-28)

*As we considered earlier in this course, four overarching themes throughout the Bible are: **creation, fall, redemption, and consummation**. The six loci of historic Christian systematic theology further explain those four themes. In his famous painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, Michelangelo portrays the perfect relationship that man had with God at first, when God created him. Nothing separated us from God.*

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Fall

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Adam's sin caused disharmony throughout all creation, beginning between humans and God. (Genesis 3:17)
Thus, sin is extremely serious; indeed, it is inexcusable, but it is not unforgivable, thanks be to our most holy yet also all-loving triune God, who has provided the only way for that forgiveness: by being credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith in him, thus reconciling us with God, which is the main focus of the Bible (Romans 4:16-25; John 14:6) and Christian theology.

+ "...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:20-23)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. a. Disharmony between man and God



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.

1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.

g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.

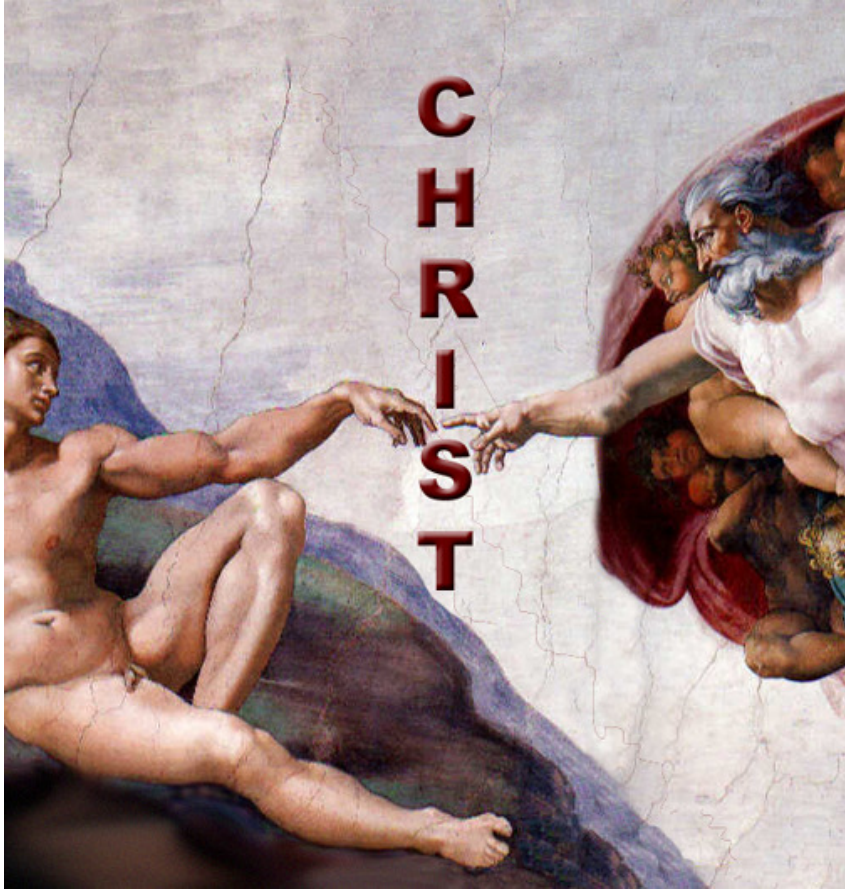
1- "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." (Matthew 27:50-51)

2- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.

1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.

g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.

3- Cleansed by Christ, human beings who believe in and follow him, now have access to fellowship with God, as Adam and Eve enjoyed before they sinned, after which they had to leave the presence of God (Genesis 3:23; cf. Exodus 24:1-2; 26:33; Leviticus 16:1-2; Hebrews 6:19-20; 9:6-8; 10:19-25; Ephesians 3:12), who is not only love but who is also holy, holy, holy and who will not allow sin and evil in his presence.

4- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new [καινός (*kainos*), i.e., new in nature or in quality] creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.

1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.

g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.

5- This great reality results in the bursting forth of exceeding joy from the hearts and minds of those who believe in and follow their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This joy has recurred throughout the history of the church and issued forth in many ways, including in the writing of inspiring hymns with their profound theology, such as these stirring hymns: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," "The Day of Resurrection," and "Low In the Grave He Lay," (also titled, "Christ Arose"). Some of the newer songs also portray this joy, and the profundity of its reality, such as "Because He Lives." For a special blessing sing along as you listen to the lyrics, rejoice with the music, and ponder the magnificent reality!

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5)
- “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5)
- “...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)
- “[Jesus said] ‘I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.’” (John 16:33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 1) Jesus’ Resurrection is the seal of his work.
 - g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.
 - 5- This great reality, expressed so beautifully and powerfully in the great hymns, e.g., “Because He Lives,” that “because he [Jesus Christ] lives,” those of us who believe in and follow him “can face tomorrow,” this great reality is implemented by the related reality that Jesus is not only in heaven but is here with us in his spirit, in and through the Holy Spirit and corporately in his body, the church. As the Scriptures in the left column state, and also many other Bible texts, the Lord, with his love and all-sufficient care is constantly with us and fully able and willing to help us in all the ways we need between now and the time he brings us home, when the time is right in his sight. See also Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

“For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.” (1 Peter 3:18–22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ exaltation includes five key aspects.
 - 2) Jesus victoriously descended into hell. With his spirit and his resurrected body reunited very early on the third day of his death, Jesus’ next act in his state of exaltation and glorification was his glorious and immediate descent into hell, where he proclaimed the accomplishment of God’s redemptive purposes, specifically the Lord’s victory over Satan, the demons, and over all those who have disbelieved and disobeyed the triune God, for example those in Noah’s time, and the final judgment to come. The risen and reigning Lord also affirmed his faithful and obedient followers, such as Noah. All of this is to encourage and assure us, when we are persecuted for Christ’s sake. As Lenski has explained, “Noah and his family are saved; we, too, are ‘saved by the resurrection of Christ,’ by this exaltation of Christ at God’s right hand.” (For more on Jesus’ preaching to the spirits in prison, see “[Easter—Biblical Meaning of Easter Signs and Symbols: Commentary on the PowerPoint slides](#).”)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- “⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’...
- “⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’
- “⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” (Acts 1:4-5; 8-9)
- “Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life— is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34)
- “²⁴but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” (Hebrews 7:24-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus’ Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 3) His ascension back to heaven occurred 40 days after his Resurrection. (Acts 1:3)
 - a) He is preparing a place for us. (John 14:2)
 - b) Our faith in him, the genuineness of which is confirmed by living for and daily striving to obey him (out of love and gratitude, not for merit), enables us to join him in heaven. (John 14:1-3,21; Romans 6:17; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:57-58; Ephesians 2:8-10; 5:20)
 - c) Jesus intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:24-25)
 - d) He rules the world in the interest of his church. (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:13-23)
 - e) Ascended to the Father, Jesus and the Father both send the Holy Spirit to us. (John 14:26; 15:26)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- “The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.” (Acts 5:30-31)
- “which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:20-23)
- “who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” (1 Peter 3:22)
- “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” (Revelation 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 4) Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, a figure in Scripture symbolizing power, and here also glory. Berkhof identifies the following attendant blessings that ensue.
 - a) Seated with the Father and having all power, being almighty, means that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Pantokrator (Greek: Ruler over All [see below]) of the universe and of the church.
 - b) He rules and protects his church and governs what occurs throughout the cosmos. The gates of hell will not overcome the church. (Matt. 16:18)
 - c) He presents his completed sacrifice to the Father, making it effective by implementing its benefits for all who believe, including by continuing intercession for us.
 - d) He continues to teach his people through the Holy Spirit and by his work in and through his heavenly and earthly servants.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing? Pantokrator

The Saving Work of Christ

- “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty [παντοκράτωρ (*pantokratōr*)].’” (Revelation 1:8)
- “...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:19-23)
- “who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” (1 Peter 3:22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
 - 4) Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, the right hand being a figure in Scripture symbolizing power, and here also glory. See the next slide for an explanation of this icon.



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing? Pantokrator

The Greek word παντοκράτωρ (*pantokratōr*) means almighty, omnipotent. It comes from two Greek words, πᾶν (*pan*), meaning all, whole, every, each, everyone, everything and κράτος (*kratos*) strength, power, might, force, dominion, authority, rule, sovereignty. The word is used by Jesus to refer to himself in Revelation 1:8, and it is used to describe him in other Bible passages as well. The letters, IC and XC, to the left and right as one faces the icon of Jesus, are the first and last letters in the Greek spelling of his name, Jesus (IC) and Christ (XC). The letters thereby further indicate who the icon represents: Jesus Christ. His great power is also symbolized in his right hand, a Biblical symbol of power (most people being right-handed thus recognize the meaning). The first two fingers represent Jesus Christ as the second person of the Trinity, and the two fingers and thumb touching represent the whole Godhead, the Trinity. This icon of Christ Jesus, which appears in the dome over the sanctuary of the Eastern Orthodox churches, provides further beautiful symbolism pointing to the powerful teaching of God's Word, which the Lord is holding and which points to and in essence is he himself. (John 1:1ff.) The dome, representing heaven, indicates that the congregation is worshiping not only with the rest of the global church militant (e.g., Ephesians 6:10-18; *op cit.* below, Ecclesiology) but also with the whole church triumphant who are with Christ Jesus, indeed with the triune God. (Revelation 4-5) We worship the Lord, under whom God has placed everything else. (Ephesians 1:19-23 et al.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’” (Matthew 25:31-34)
- “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father....²⁴“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life....²⁷And [the Father] has given [the Son] authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.” (John 5:22-27)
- See also Acts 10:42; 17:31; Matthew 19:28; Luke 3:17; Romans 2:16; 14:9; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; James 5:9, 1 John 2:1.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus Christ’s Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.

- 5) Christ’s exaltation will be seen in his physical and visible return to earth in his Second Coming in his function as Judge. (Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7. See more below in Eschatology.)
 - a) Jesus’ Second Coming is not to be confused with his coming with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (where he was in a spiritual and invisible form).
 - b) Jesus will judge the world and bring to completion and perfection the salvation of those of us who belong to him.
 - c) By God’s grace, Jesus is both our judge (John 5:22-27) and our defense attorney, who is the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 2:1-2)
 - d) In so doing, all will see the complete victory of Christ’s redemptive work and his glorious exaltation.

Reflect/Discuss: How Would You Answer Jesus' Question to His Disciples:
"Who Do You Say that I Am?" (Matthew 16:15)

This is the key question of life and eternity, which we should also ask of family members and others. The answer should include the following:

- *Jesus is the Second Person of the triune God, the only begotten Son of God.* (John 3:16)
- *He is fully divine, being of one substance with the Father.* (John 3:16; 10:30)
- *He is fully human but perfect and sinless, and he suffered and died in our place.* (Matthew 1:18-25; 27:19-66; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14-15; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19)
- *He physically rose from the dead.* (Luke 24:36-53; 1 Corinthians 15)
- *He ascended to heaven.* (Acts 1:11)
- *Jesus is Lord over all.* (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22)
- *He is coming again.* (John 21:22-23; Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We will study this subject below in Eschatology.

How Would You Answer Jesus' Question to His Disciples: "Who Do You Say that I Am?" (Matthew 16:15)

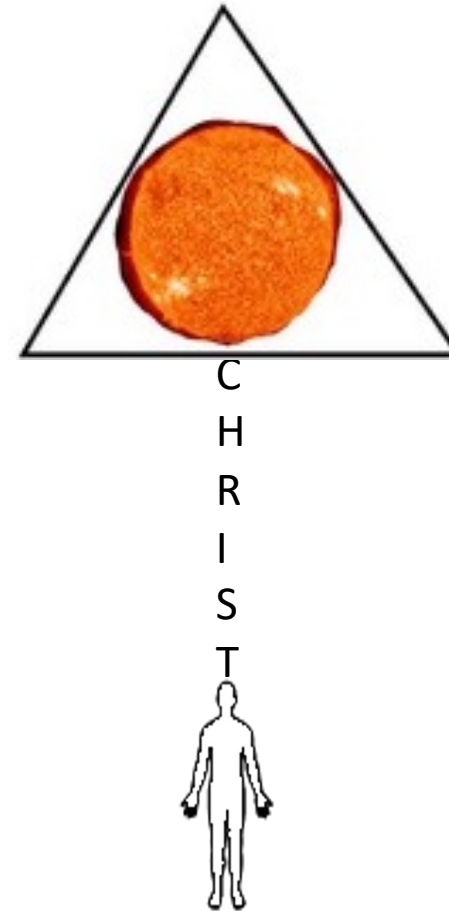
- Both the modernist and postmodernist are interested in Jesus. Ask them to tell you if they know about Jesus and, if so, what do they think about him? (Jesus' question to his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" is still the key question to ask people today and always. [Matthew 16:13]) In the ensuing discussion be sure to point out that, Jesus, who was born through the virgin, Mary, and whose legal father was Joseph, later said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) He did not say he was a truth, part of the truth, knew the truth, or pointed to the truth. He simply revealed that he is the truth! Further, he added that "for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37)
- Christ is also the basis of all truth. The second person of the Trinity, "is the image of the invisible God...all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15-17) He is the standard, the criterion, the benchmark, to determine the truth. Whenever we wonder what is true or right about a certain matter, we can and should look to Jesus' life and teaching.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

Identify and explain how it helps you in your daily life to know, and to know about, Jesus Christ and what he has done, is doing, and will do? (See also Eschatology.)

[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]



Resources

In order to facilitate course preparation, the slides in this overview of Biblical Christology have been selected from the Christology section in the original and unabridged version of the PowerPoint program (PPT), [*Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including God’s Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity.*](#)

This abbreviated PPT is still larger than can be covered in an average one-class session, particularly in the West. Therefore, [an accompanying further abridged PPT](#) for a one-session class is available with highlighting of especially essential parts to help when time is very limited.

For further information about the subjects on the Christology slides in both this abbreviated PPT overview and the further abridged PPT, see the additional slides in the Christology section that are on the original and unabridged PPT, which is located on the [Christian Theology](#) page of the author’s free and secure [general Website](#). See also other informative articles on the Christian Theology page.

Copyright © 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 by Edward D. Seely. Permission is granted to use this program, without changing the text, for church education and other church ministries worldwide.