

## CHRISTOLOGY

### Introduction

I. Definition of Christology: A study of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

II. Scope of Christology

Christology is a subject more vast than the study of the life of Christ, for “not years, but ages, here extended themselves before the eyes of him who would investigate the subject; not through earth alone must his imagination roam, to heaven must his spirit soar; not only of the past and the present, also of the mysteries of the future must he testify, under the leading of the Spirit of truth. All the rays of the glory of Christ must he, so far as possible, collect into one focus, and not merely present a series of sacred and profane testimonies about the God-man, but, illuminated and guided by God’s own testimony, must display Him Himself, in His peerless lustre, before the eyes of many” (J.J. Van Oosterzee, The Image Of Christ as Presented in Scripture, pp. xiii, xiv).

III. Importance of Christology

A. Theologically: Christology stands at the heart of Christianity and every major doctrine is related to the person and work of Christ.

B. Biblically: The whole of the New Testament centers in Jesus Christ. If we were to remove Christ from Christianity, there would be no Christianity. It has been the simple preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion that has made such an impact on this world.

“Here is a man who was born in a lowly manger, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in an obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty, and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never owned a house. He never had a family. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the power of his divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying -- his coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed tomb through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone. Today he is the center-piece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.” (Phillips Brooks)

C. Religiously: To be a Christian, one must know the person of Jesus Christ

personally. This is not true of any other religion in the world.

“Christianity is the only religion in the world which rests on the person of its founder. A man can be a faithful Mohammedan without in the least concerning himself with the person of Mohammed. So also a man can be a true and faithful Buddhist without knowing anything whatever about Buddha. It is quite different with Christianity. Christianity is so inextricably bound up with Christ that our view of the Person of Christ involves and determines our view of Christianity” (W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Christianity Is Christ*, p. 5)

- D. Practically: There has never been a person like Jesus Christ who stirred such devotion in the hearts of men. Men have forsaken everything worldly to follow this One who calls Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life.

“Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself have founded empires, but upon what did those creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone established His empire upon love. I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me. . . but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present, with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has succeeded in raising the mind of men toward the Unseen, that it become insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others, difficult to satisfy. He asks for the human heart. He will have it entirely for Himself. He demands it unconditionally” (Napoleon Bonaparte).

## I. Christ Pre-Incarnate

### I. In Eternity (Preexistence before time)

#### A. Direct Statements of Scripture

1. John 1:1-3: The “Word” is a reference to Christ (1:14). In (a) beginning Christ was face to face with God and He was in very essence God.
2. John 8:58: Christ in His own words said, “Before Abraham ever came into existence, I am.” (cf. Ex. 3: 13-14)
3. Col. 1:17: Christ existed before all created matter.
4. John 1:30: John, the Baptist recognized Christ’s pre-existence.

#### B. Indirect Statements of Scripture

1. Christ was sent. (John 17:18)
2. Christ became a man (John 1:14).
3. Christ descended out of heaven (John 3:13) and comes from heaven (John 3:31 cf. John 6:33, 38, 41, 50, 51, 58).
4. Christ was from above (John 8:23).
5. Christ was born a child but given as a Son (Isa. 9:6).
6. Christ shared the glory of the Father before the world ever came into existence (John 17:5).
7. POINT: These verses all imply previous existence.

#### C. Argument from Eternality

1. Christ is said to be eternal (Micah 5:2 cf. John 1:1,2; 8:58).
2. POINT: If Christ is eternal, then He must have pre-existence as a person.

#### D. Argument from The Trinity

1. In the Old Testament
  - a. The use of the plural “Elohim” (Gen. 1:1).

- b. The use of the plurals “our” (Gen 1:26) and “us” (Gen. 3:22; 11:7).
- c. The mention of the Son (Psa. 2:7-9).
- 2. In the New Testament
  - a. Jesus is called God (John 1:1; Heb. 1:8; John 20:28).
  - b. Benediction and baptismal formulas (2 Cor. 13,14; Matt. 28:19).
- 3. **POINT:** Since Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, then He is God. If God, then He must always have existed because God is eternal.

## II. In the Old Testament (Pre-existence in time and before the incarnation)

### A. Angel of Jehovah

1. **Introduction:** Jesus Christ is manifested in the Old Testament through theophanies or the appearances of God in visible and bodily form before the incarnation. The theophanies are chiefly (if not exclusively) appearances of the Angel of Jehovah, and may also be spoken of as Christophanies, for it is the Second Person of the Trinity who is ever the visible God of the Old Testament.
2. Usage of the Angel of Jehovah
  - a. “The identification of the Angel of Jehovah as the pre-incarnate Son of God is demonstrated as follows: (1) the Angel of Jehovah has several titles or designations. The title, “the Angel of Jehovah,” (the Hebrew construction admits of no other translation) occurs 55 times in the Old Testament. The title, “the Angel of God,” with the definite article, occurs eight times, clearly pointing to a certain angel, i.e. the Angel of Jehovah. In at least 17 passages in the Old Testament, the context indicates that an angel spoken of is the Angel of Jehovah.” (D. Lindsey, “Christology Notes,” p. 10).
  - b. “The Scripture passages on the Angel of Jehovah may be divided into six classes: (1) those in which He is called “the Angel of Jehovah” (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; Judges 2:1-4; Zech. 12:8); (2) Those in which He is called “the Angel of God,” which is the title given to the Angel of Jehovah and to none other (cf. Gen. 21:17-19; Ex. 14:19; 2 Sam. 19:27); (3) those in which He is simply called “the Angel,” but which according to the context must be the Angel of Jehovah (cf. Gen. 24:40; Hos. 12:3-5; Zech. 2:3); (4) those in which He is called by other angelic titles namely, the “Angel of the Presence” (Is. 63:9), and the “Angel of the Covenant” (Mal. 3:1); (5) those in which a theophany is elsewhere mentioned as the Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 28:11-22; cf. 31:11-13; and Gen. 32:24-32; cf. Hos. 12:3-5); and (6) those in which the Christophany must evidently be the Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 31:11-13; Josh. 5:13-6:2; Dan. 10:1-21).” (D. Lindsey, “Christology”, p. 10).
3. **The Angel of Jehovah Is Equated With God**
  - a. God said that He would never share his name with another (Isa. 42:8); therefore the Angel of Jehovah is God.
  - b. The Angel of Jehovah is identified as Jehovah (Gen. 16:7-13; Gen. 22:11-18; 31:11-13; 48:16, 16 cf. 45:5; Ex. 3:1ff).
  - c. The Angel of Jehovah is recognized as possessing the attributes and prerogatives of God (cf. Gen. 16:33; 18:25; Ex. 3:2-5; 23:21).
4. The Angel of Jehovah Is a Distinct Person from Jehovah
  - a. Jehovah sends his angel (Gen. 24:7 cf. 24:40).
  - b. Moses spoke of Jehovah sending an angel to lead them (Num. 20:16).
  - c. The Angel of the Lord speaks to Jehovah (Zech. 1:12).
  - d. **POINT:** We may conclude that if the Angel of Jehovah is God and yet a distinct person then the Angel of Jehovah is the Second Person of the Trinity.
5. The Angel of Jehovah Is the Second Person of the Trinity
  - a. The Angel of Jehovah no longer appears after the Incarnation of Christ.
  - b. The Second Person of the Trinity is the only visible representation of God.

God, the Father is Spirit (John 4:24) and no man has seen God at any time (John 1:18). Also the Holy Spirit is a spirit. Therefore, since spirits cannot be seen the only visible manifestation of God is Jesus Christ. Thus the Angel of Jehovah, being God, must be the preincarnate Christ.

6. Points to Ponder

- a. Will the Christian ever see God, the Father, or God, the Holy Spirit? Will he only see Christ in eternity?

B. Prophecy

1. Intro.; Prophecy deals with Christ in the Old Testament but not specifically in bodily form or in a pre-existent state. However Christ invites people to search the Old Testament for evidence of Him (John 5:39, 46-47; Luke 24:25-27).

2. Prophecies of Christ's Birth

- a. Date of birth: According to Gen. 49:10, before the final destruction of the Jewish government in 70 A.D.; according to Dan. 9:25, before 30 A.D., the expiration of the 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy.

- b. Place: Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)

- c. Manner: Supernatural virgin birth (Isa. 7:14).

3. Prophecies Of Christ's Life And Character

- a. Savior and Deliverer (Gen. 3:15; Job 19:25; Isa. 53).

- b. True deity (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2).

- c. Preceded by a messenger (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3-5).

- d. To be a Prophet (Deut. 18:15; John 1:21; 4:29; 6:14).

- e. To be a Priest (1 Sam. 2:35; Psa. 110:4; Zech. 6:13).

- f. To be a King (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psa. 2; Jer. 23:5-6).

- g. To be a Cornerstone and Foundation (Isa. 28:14-18; Psa. 118:22; Acts 4:11).

- h. To be the obedient Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 52:13-53:12).

4. Prophecies of Christ's Death

- a. Betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12).

- b. Falsely accused (Psa. 35:11).

- c. Spit upon (Isa. 50:6).

- d. Pierced (Psa. 22:16).

- e. Ridiculed (Psa. 22:6-8)

- f. Forsaken of God (Psa. 22:1-2, 11, 19).

- g. Bones not broken (Psa. 34:20).

- h. Silent before accusers (Isa. 53:7).

- i. To die with the wicked (Isa. 53:9) and to make intercession for them (Isa. 53:12).

- j. To be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9).

- k. To be a sacrifice for sin (Isa. 53:5-6, 12).

5. Prophecies of Christ's Resurrection (Psa. 16:10; 118:22-24)

6. Prophecies of Christ's Glory (Dan. 7:14; Isa. 11; Jer. 23:5-6; 2 Sam. 7:12ff.)

7. Points to Ponder

- a. Over 300 prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ were literally fulfilled.

- b. The mathematical possibility that it is just chance that Christ was the person that filled this prophecy is:

$$\frac{1}{84 \text{ (with 97 zeros behind it)}}$$

- c. This is a phenomenon based on facts that must be intelligently dealt with. The liberal tries to squirm out of this dilemma by re-dating the Old Testament books but this still doesn't solve the problem completely.