



THE HISTORICAL JESUS

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION

BY DR BRUCE WOOLARD

The purpose of our series is to identify the True Jesus. There are many false versions of Jesus i.e.

2 Corinthians 11:4 “For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.”

Matthew 24:5 “For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.”

THE CREATIVE WORK OF CHRIST

Colossians 1:15-19 “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.” First born in Greek is “prototoxos” which means *pre-eminence*, like a first lady or a prime minister.

Christ pre-existed and created all things. Sonship refers to humanity not deity.

WHAT IS CHRISTOLOGY?

Christology, derived from “Christ,” refers to Jesus office, and “-ology,” meaning “the study of,” is the study of Christ, both Jesus as a person and the work of Christ. Christology is far-reaching. As one might expect, it covers Jesus’ earthly birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. However, it also pertains to His eternal existence prior to His earthly life, His humanity and deity, Old Testament Christological prophecies, and His future return and reign.

“Do you want to learn more about Jesus?”

Like many terms relating to theology, “Christology” sounds like a term that will be difficult to approach. However, at the end of the day, it is simply the study of our Lord Jesus, and it can be of great spiritual benefit.

What is Christology?



DEFINITION OF CHRISTOLOGY

The word “Christology” comes from two Greek roots. The first, “Christ,” is derived from the Hebrew word “Messiah,” meaning “anointed one,” the promised deliverer of Israel. The second, “-ology,” comes from the Greek “logia” and is now used in English to mean “the study of.” Thus, Christology is the study of the anointed delivered, the Christ. In Christianity, Christ is equated with the person of Jesus. Christology is, therefore, the study of Jesus, the Son of God. Remember Christ is not the second name of Jesus, it is His office of Messiahship.

- The study of Jesus Christ and His provision of salvation for a lost humanity
- Christ *is* Christianity. Without Him, Christianity has no meaning.

Christology is one of three studies of the persons of the Trinity, the other two being Paterology, the study of God the Father, and Pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit. Pater = Father and Pneuma= Spirit.

HISTORY OF CHRISTOLOGY

People began asking questions about Jesus and who He was immediately after His death and resurrection. In the New Testament books of Acts and the Epistles, apostles like Peter and Paul began to lay out Christology, explaining who Jesus is, what He did, and what it means.

Of course, early believers and inquisitors had plenty of questions and theories, ranging from the Gnostics, who rejected Jesus’ humanity as incompatible with their ideas that the material world was inherently evil, to the ideas of Arius, who portrayed Jesus’ divinity as lesser than that of the Father, making Him more human.

Arianism and Gnosticism — the church in order to finalise what they believed about Christ, the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, the leaders of the church put together the Nicene Creed. The creed was tweaked at further councils, and the section on Jesus now reads as follows: *“We believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.”*

This Nicene Creed is an excellent starting point for Christology and is accepted as authoritative by orthodoxy.

NOTE: The Scriptures already declared who Jesus was. The church had to articulate this belief.

WHAT CHRISTOLOGY MEANS TO CHRISTIANS

Jesus is central to Christianity. To understand our faith, we need to understand the Person on whom we base our faith.

There are plenty of views on Jesus out there. Some hold that He was just a good teacher. Others believe He was just one of many prophets. However, Jesus says of Himself, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (**John 14:6**). Our salvation directly depends on what we believe about Christ. Will we recognize Him as Lord and Saviour?

However, Christology goes beyond that. Christology is also a way to get to know Jesus, to learn more about Him. Relationships grow stronger as two people learn more about each other. In human relationships, we value people who listen to us and care about what we do, think, and say. The Jews wanted to stone Jesus because He claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah—**Read John 8:53-59.**

Jesus already knows everything about each of us. But do we know Him? Jesus in His pre-existent state.

WHAT WAS GOD DOING BEFORE CREATION?

Saint Augustine had two answers to those who asked what was God doing before creation. Jokingly he said, God was preparing Hell for people who ask such questions. On a serious level, he noted there was no time before God created and hence the question is meaningless. When God created the heavens and the earth He also created space and time. Before time began there was only eternity. God is a timeless being and time only began with His creation of the universe.

GOD’S CHARACTER

One of the outstanding attributes of God is love, for God is love—**1 John 4:16** *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”* Before God created the universe and the angels, the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit could interact in love, otherwise there would have been a time when God’s love could not be activated, because love, to be complete, needs an object to love. Love is eternal and, therefore, in eternity past existed in the Trinity.



THE “US” IN THE TRINITY

Genesis 1:26 *“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”* The plural usage of “us” and “our” implies a tri-unity of persons.

WHO MADE GOD?

The aseity of God means self-existent. Jesus is central to Christianity. To understand our faith, we need to understand the Person on whom we base our faith.

THE WORD

John 1:1-4 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”*

λόγος
logos

Jesus was and is the “Logos”. The Greek philosophers spoke of the Logos as an eternal word. John picks up on this thought and introduces Jesus as the eternal word, the Logos, of God.

HIS PRE-EXISTENCE

The word of man is that by which he expresses himself, by which he puts himself in communication with others. By his word he makes his thoughts and feelings known, and by his word he issues commands and gives effect to his will. The word that he speaks carries his thoughts and character. By a man’s word one could perfectly know him even though one were blind. Sight could reveal but little regarding his character if one had not listened to his word. A man’s word is his character in expression.

Likewise, the “Word of God” is that by which He communicates with other beings, deals with them; it is the means by which He expresses His power, intelligence, and will. Christ is that Word, because through Him God revealed His activity, will, and purpose, and because by Him God contacts the world. We express ourselves through words; the eternal God expresses Himself through His Son who is *“the express image of His person”* **Hebrews 1:3**. Christ is the Word of God because He reveals God by demonstrating Him in person.

He not only brings God’s message—He is God’s message.

Consider the need of such a Revealer. Try to comprehend the size of the universe, with its untold millions of heavenly bodies, covering distances that stagger the mind; picture the mighty reaches of space beyond the universe of matter; then try to conceive of the mightiness of the One who is the source of it all.

GOD PREDATES TIME.