CHRISTOLOGY:

THE STUDY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Introduction
(Lesson 1)

Christology comes from two Greek words, “Christos,” the anointed one or the Messiah, and “logos,” word, or study of things related to a particular subject. Christ Himself invites his disciples both ancient and modern to study Him.

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26 "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:25-30.

“Christianity by its very name has always honored Jesus Christ as its historical and theological center. No other persona has been more essential to its origination and subsequent history and no set of doctrines has been more determinative than the doctrines of the person and work of Christ. …One’s faith in and understanding of Jesus Christ involve the most important theological issues anyone can face.” (John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 11)

Historical Theology

Historical Theology is the study of the development of theological doctrinal truths in their historical settings. Unfortunately, theology tends to be defined and refined in the crucible of attacks on the Christian faith. Historical theology gives Christians perspective as they view their doctrinal beliefs and as they meet the attacks on the “faith once delivered to the saints.” “The early church Fathers, struggling with the obvious problem of the doctrine of the Trinity and how could God be Three and yet One, stated in enduring terms that while God is One numerically, He subsists in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit who are equal in eternity, power and glory. Each possessing all the divine attributes and yet having properties which distinguish Them with the unity of the Trinity. A milestone in the statement of this important doctrine of the Trinity was reached in the Nicene Council in 325 and was matured and restated by the Protestant Reformers.” (John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 11)
Modern Liberalism

Theologically, Ritschl and Schleimacher thought and taught that the Bible should be studied for its spiritual intent, its ethical and theological implications. The explicit statements of the Bible were less important. In other words, just the moral teachings of Jesus and not the theological claims of Jesus were important. Scientifically, The rise of Darwinism also contributed to modern liberalism. Since it is a natural system that has no place for the supernatural, and thus no place for God.

Neorthodoxy

Since liberalism of the 1800’s and 1900’s was so light and unsatisfying, a new teaching filled the void. Karl Barth challenged it by acknowledging a real and living Jesus Christ who could be known. The Christ of Scripture is the Christ of Experience. The problem is that the Bible is only true when you “experience” it as true. Most “Barthians” emphasize contemporary experience over historic revelation (true statements of the Bible).

Bultmannism

Bultmann claimed that we needed to “demythologize” the Bible to get down to the core truth of it, the “deeper meaning.” He wanted to return to “the historical Jesus” which in his thinking was a man who spoke in the language of his day, but was not what the Gospels claimed for him. He felt the early church manufactured those claims. The real problem with his view is the standard or criteria for deciding which statements of the Gospels truly belong to Christ and which ones do not. The interpreter becomes the authority instead of the Bible being the authority.

Conclusions

IN the light of both ancient and modern theological attacks on the Person of Christ, at least two considerations become paramount. Dr. John Walvoord cites these in his book, Jesus Christ our Lord, “First and probably most important is the fact that any Christological system can be no better than the view of Scripture on which it rests.” In other words, there must be a commitment to the accuracy, authority, and inerrancy of Scripture. “A second major fact in Christology has been the hermeneutics of principles of interpretation of Scripture.” Not only what is the Bible, but what principles or laws of interpretation do we use to understand it. Do we interpret the Scripture as “allegorical” like some of the early heretics such as Arius did? Or do we interpret the Bible in a more “literal” way? The literal, historical, grammatical, and contextual method of interpreting the Bible
seems to the only way of assuring that the interpreter does not replace the Scripture as the authority for what is true. “The search for a Christology which is not linked to the authoritative Scripture is therefore endless and almost fruitless.” (John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 11-12)

One of the subtle attacks upon Christology today is sentimentalism without substance. It is an emotional and experiential sense of knowing Christ without accepting the claims the Bible makes about Him or the claims He makes concerning Himself. It views Christ based on the subjective experience and background of the individual instead of viewing Him on the basis of His objective statements. It tends to be very sloppy and inconsistent theology that is mentally lazy. “The attitude of a friendly interest in Jesus Christ, but an unwillingness to accept the theological statements of the Bible concerning Him as a Member of the Trinity, as virgin-born, and incarnate, and His death as a real redemption from sin, continues to grip a major section of the church today.” (John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 12)

Questions:

How does Christology relate to the other areas of theology?

1. Theology Proper  (The Study of God)

2. Bibliology  (The Study of the Bible)

3. Biblical Anthropology  (The Study of Man)

4. Harmartiology  (The Study of Sin)

5. Soteriology  (The Study of Salvation)

6. Pneumatology  (The Study of the Holy Spirit)

7. Ecclesiology  (The study of the Church)

8. Eschatology  (The study of Future Things)

9. Angelology  (The study of Angels)
Three statements about Christ by three disciples who knew Him:

Peter (Matthew 16:13-20)

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." 20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

John (John 1:1-3, 14)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Thomas (John 20:26-31)

26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." 30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

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