

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

WEEK 1: THE PERSON OF CHRIST¹

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW SERIES

- As we study systematic theology, it is not simply for the purpose of gaining knowledge about a topic. It is to see how the Bible as a whole treats a certain topic and build guardrails for our life and practice.
- For instance, when we study the Holy Spirit, we will see why He came in John 15:26... “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me...”
 - Why is this important? When we see churches who are making their service all about their interaction with the Holy Spirit and making Him take center stage...we can know rightly they are not talking about the same spirit.
 - This is one of many examples as to how systematic theology keeps us on the right track when worshipping the God of heaven.
- How do systematic theology and Biblical theology differ?
 - A very simple definition will show the difference between them:
 - Systematic theology seeks to synthesize what the Bible says about a particular topic.
 - Biblical theology traces that particular topic from its origin through its completion. This is usually part of or closely related to the history of redemption.
 - Both are helpful and both have their place.

INTRODUCTION

- Today and next week we are going to consider *who Jesus Christ is*:
 - We will consider the deity of Christ and draw out implications for our lives.
 - We will study the humanity of Christ.
 - We will turn our attention to what Jesus has done for us in and through His life, death, resurrection, ascension, heavenly session, and triumphant return.

¹ <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/systematic-theology/>

- The answer to this question, *who is the Christ*, is of the absolute importance in life. There is no room to get this wrong or simply not care. Literal life and death hang in the balance.
- Why? **John 20:31** “...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.*”
 - **Philippians 3:8-11** “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of *knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and *may be found in Him*, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, *but that which is through faith in Christ*, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection* and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ***in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.***”
 - There is no life in any other name. If we get Christ wrong, we are dead in our trespass and sin and we have no hope for the next life.
 - You do not go to heaven because you were sincere...but wrong. You do not go to heaven because you worshipped someone that was Christlike...You get to heaven because you know who Christ is and what He has done.
- The center of our faith and the source of our hope isn't a creed, an idea, an experience, a church, or a philosophy. It's a person: Jesus the Messiah.
- Knowing him isn't only the beginning of the Christian life – *it's the whole Christian life*. As believers, we know Jesus personally, which means Christology is deeply practical.
- When we discuss the person of Christ, we always want to keep in mind this great mystery, that since the incarnation Jesus Christ has been both fully God and fully Man in one person.
- **He is one person, with two natures.** Scripture teaches that: “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person and will be so forever.” Where do we see that in scripture?
- Let's start with the deity of Christ. Jesus Christ is fully God.
- The teaching from both the Old and New Testaments concerning Christ's deity is overwhelming.
- *If you acknowledge the authority of Scripture*, then you can't miss the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- As Jesus is walking on the road to Emmaus, He encounters two men. After these men had lamented about the Christ, Jesus says in **Luke 24:25–27** “*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His*

glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

- Jesus tells these men on the road to Emmaus that He is in the Old Testament. It is precisely the Old Testament where we see prophecies concerning His coming and His triumphant reign.
- We learn how he has worked for the salvation of His people from the beginning.
- Jesus further says in **Luke 24:44** “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the *Law of Moses* and *the Prophets* and *the Psalms* must be fulfilled.”
- **What is significant about what Jesus says here?**
 - The Law of Moses? The prophets? The Psalms?

Son of Man (Dan 7:9-10, 13-14; Matt 9:6, 12:8, 19:28, 20:28, 25:31-32)

- First, we have Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man. In Dan 7, we find a glorious description of the heavenly throne room and at the center of this scene is the Lord, the “Ancient of Days”, who is seated upon His throne. just a few verses later, Daniel describes another vision, but this time he sees another figure, the Son of Man.
- **Daniel 7:13-14** “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”
 - Here the Son of Man receives worship from all nations and rules over an eternal kingdom.
 - Who else could do that but someone who is divine? And who is this Son of Man?
 - Jesus noticeably used the title for himself and taught in **Matthew 25:31-32**: “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...”
 - You can hear how Jesus’ words allude to Daniel 7.

Son of David (Gen 49:8-10; 2 Sam 7:12-13, 16; Ps 2:6-7; 45; 72; Isa 9:6-7)

- Next, the Old Testament builds expectation that a Son of David is coming who will reign on David’s throne forever.

- God promises this to David in **2 Samuel 7:13**: “He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” This highly anticipated Son begins to be described in terms that are unmistakably divine.
 - **Psalm 2:7**, “The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’ So, the son of David is also the Son of God.
 - That could mean simply that this king represents God like a son; but other passages suggest that it means even more.
 - **Psalm 72** depicts foreign kings bowing down before this king, and people from all nations blessing his name.
 - **Psalm 45:6-7** “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”
 - We are told in that this passage is about Christ in **Hebrews 1:8–9** “But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”
- We something similar in **Isaiah 9:6–7** “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”
 - So, who is this king? A royal son of David who is also Mighty God. His name is Everlasting Father not in the sense that he is God the Father, but that he is a king who rules benevolently like a loving father.
 - This royal figure is Jesus Christ. That’s what Christ means, after all, -- it’s the Greek translation for Messiah, which means “Anointed One.”
 - **Romans 1:2-3** Paul says the gospel is a message about God’s “Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Here are 6 ways the New Testament teaches Jesus is fully God.

1. Jesus is called God and Lord (Matt 1:21-23; Lk 2:11; Rom 9:5; Tit 2:13)

- John 1:1 says “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- Romans 9:5 calls him “Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever.”
- Titus 2:13 calls him “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- We also have many instances where the words used for God [Theos] and Lord [Kyrios] in the Greek translation of the Old Testament [Septuagint] are applied directly to Jesus.
- Perhaps one of the most staggering examples of this is Phil 2:11, where Paul says that every tongue will “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
 - Here, he is quoting Isaiah 45:23 nearly word for word. And yet the one to whom every knee bows, and every tongue swears allegiance in Isaiah 45 is none other than Yahweh, the covenant Lord of Israel.
 - For Paul’s readers, immersed in the language of the Old Testament, Philippians 2 could not be any clearer: *Jesus is Yahweh*.

2. Jesus Christ claimed to be God (Jhn 8:58, 10:30)

- There is his great statement in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was born, I am!”
 - The Jews understood that he was claiming to be God. “I AM WHO I AM” was God’s way of identifying Himself to Moses.
 - They picked up stones to kill Jesus because their unbelieving hearts judged this to be a blasphemous statement. Jesus was equating himself with God!
- In John 10:30, Christ says “I and the Father are one,” and again the Jewish leaders attempt to stone him.
 - Why? Verse 33, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

3. Jesus Christ is presented as the object of the believer's faith and trust

(Jhn 14:1; 17:3; 2 Cor 5:15; Eph 3:12; 5:23; Col 1:27; 1 Thes 1:3; 1 Tim 1:1)

- In John 14:1, Jesus says “Believe in God; believe also in me.”
- 1 Thes 1:3, Paul speaks of the believers “steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- John 17:3, eternal life is to know Jesus Christ.
- Since the OT consistently teaches us to hope and trust only in God, it follows that Jesus as the object of our hope is indeed divine.

4. Jesus Christ is presented as the object of the believer's worship (Matt

2:10-11, 28:17; Jhn 5:23; Phil 2:9–11; Heb 1:6; Rev 5:12)

- Judaism was staunchly monotheistic, so this worship should intrigue us.
- Matthew 2:10-11 “When [the Magi] saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.”
- John 5:23, The Father “has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.”
- Remember Isaiah 48:11 – God says “My glory I will not give to another.”
 - Yet from his birth in Matthew 2 to the heavenly throne room in Revelation, Jesus receives worship, glory, and honor.
 - This isn't blasphemy or idolatry. It is appropriate, delightfully so, because Jesus is God. That leads us to number

5. Jesus is described as being God and performing the works of God (Jhn

1:1-3, 14-18; Heb 1:1-4; Col 1:15-20).

- Jesus is the Creator.
 - John 1:1-3, 14-18 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. *All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*”
 - Hebrews 1:1-4 “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all

things, *through whom also he created the world*. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

- Jesus reveals God and sustains all creation.
 - Colossians 1:15-20 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

6. Jesus preexisted as the eternal Son of God prior to His incarnation

(1 Cor 8:6; 10:4, 9; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 4:4; Rom 8:3; Col 1:15-20; Phil 2:6; 1 Tim 1:15; 3:16; 2 Tim 1:9-10).

- This is an important point, because it emphasizes that God the Son has always existed. It’s not that Jesus, a human being, became God somehow – by his miraculous birth or marvelous baptism.
- ***God, the second person of the Trinity, took on a human nature in addition to his divine nature. The incarnation is not subtraction, but addition.***
- We see this in a passage like **Philippians 2:6-7**: “Though he was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”
 - *He didn’t give up his divinity*, but the status and privilege of his heavenly standing.
- **2 Timothy 1:9-10**, God gave us grace “in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which has now been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.”
- In these passages, Paul isn’t trying to demonstrate the preexistence of Christ. Paul is arguing for something else on the basis of ***a commonly held belief in Christ as the eternal Son of God***.
 - In other words, he is not arguing for the preexistence of Christ. He’s arguing from it. That’s how bedrock a truth this is. Scripture is absolutely clear: Jesus Christ is God.

THE CHALCEDONIAN DEFINITION

- The question of how Jesus has both a divine and human nature in one person has led to considerable thought for theologians over the centuries.
- We believe this because it is the evident teaching of scripture.
- Having considered his deity, it should be helpful to look at the key historical statement about his divine and human natures. It's called the **Chalcedonian Definition of 451 A.D.**
 - The Chalcedonian Creed was written amid controversy between the western and eastern churches over the meaning of the incarnation, the ecclesiastical influence of the Byzantine emperor, and the supremacy of the Roman Pope. The western churches readily accepted the creed, but some eastern churches did not. The adopted Creed specifically maintained the two distinct natures of Christ (divine and human) over against teaching of Eutyches -- that Christ had only one nature, a mixture of human and divine. Eutychianism is also known as monophysitism from monos (single) and physis (nature), which confuses both Christ's humanity and true deity.
- Bible-believing Christians agreed on this statement because they recognized that the person of Christ is a critical doctrine. *If you get Jesus wrong, everything else falls out of place.*

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S DEITY

Why does the deity of Christ matter? Here are 3 reasons.

1. The deity of Christ matters for revelation.

- God hasn't merely sent us a prophet or a messenger. He hasn't just given us a book. He has given us Himself. How would you feel if someone showed up on your doorstep with a message from the President? Now, what about if you opened your door and there was the President himself?
- We should be reassured as we don't have to wonder about what God is like...is He merciful or compassionate. Hebrews 1, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."
- John 1:18, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,' he says (John 14:9). God cannot be otherwise."
 - If you want to know God, look to Jesus Christ. He is God in the flesh.

2. The deity of Christ matters for salvation.

- The constant message of the Bible is that no mere man could achieve salvation for himself, yet alone on behalf of others.
- Salvation belongs to the Lord, Jonah 2:9 declares. God himself achieves this salvation, and he does so in the person of his Son.
- In a striking phrase in Acts 20:28, Paul teaches that God bought the church "with his own blood." The blood of a mere man, it seems, would not atone for countless millions.
- Col 1:19-20, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."
- Only the God-man could serve as the perfect mediator between man and God (1 Tim 2:5). Jesus didn't just die as a good example. He died as a sinless sacrifice, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18)
- His resurrection proves his divinity – as Heb 7:16 teaches, Jesus is our high priest "by the power of an indestructible life."
- This means that sin-stained rebels like us have a sure and steady hope. Our salvation doesn't come through higher consciousness, positive thinking, religiosity, the five pillars of Islam or the eightfold path of Buddhism, all of which assume that human beings can basically be delivered from our plight with enough discipline and devotion.

- God himself accomplishes and guarantees our redemption.

3. The deity of Christ matters for the Christian life.

- Our salvation isn't some sort of get-out-of-hell transaction. It's a transformation of who we are. We go from being represented by Adam to being united with Christ. "Jesus Christ is in you," Paul tells the Corinthians (2 Cor 13:5).
 - Christ dwells in us by his Spirit, and that is why we can walk in a way pleasing to God. Rom 8:10, "If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."
 - Take heart if you are struggling hard against sin and temptation. When you were born again, you became a new person, empowered by the Spirit of Jesus.
 - Sin is never inevitable for the Christian. It no longer defines us. Christ is ours and we are his.

CONCLUSION: KNOW AND ADORE CHRIST

- How should we walk away from what we've learned today?
- For one, we should seek to know Christ. Abide in him. Listen to his Word.
 - John Owen said, "You love Him not, because you know Him not."
 - John Calvin wrote, "Since rich store of every kind of good abounds in [Christ], let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other."
- We should adore Jesus Christ as God! As Paul says in 2 Cor 4:6, God has shone a light in our hearts, and that light is the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
 - There is no higher beauty, no greater glory, no better love than his.
 - He shines forth with incomparable loveliness. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King, the radiance of the glory of God: worthy of worship, awe, wonder, and affection.
 - He is supreme and lifted up, yet he humbled himself on the vilest cross.
 - He took our filthy rags and clothed us in his brilliant righteousness.
 - One day he will return, and we will sit with him at the banquet table of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.
 - The cleansed and radiant Bride with her glorious, loving, faithful, divine Bridegroom.