



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 2 – THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

LESSON 51 – THE TRINITY: JESUS THE SON – THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE (JOHN MACARTHUR), PGS. 235-254

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Christology

- ▶ As the Second Person of the Godhead, the Savior's person and work constitute the central testimony of all Scripture.
- ▶ Rev. 19:10 Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
- ▶ Scripture speaks of both the full deity and full humanity of Christ, but in examining Him we want to see what the Scriptures tell us about the Son of God from eternity past to eternity future and so must begin with His existence in eternity past.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: Existence

- ▶ Eternity Past – throughout Scripture we have learned about the Being and Persons of the Trinity, each fully Being God while interacting as Three Distinct Persons.
- ▶ The Second Person is described as being “with God” (John 1:1), meaning He is distinct as a separate identity within the Trinity.
- ▶ What kind of preexistence did Christ have prior to His incarnation?
- ▶ He resided in heaven, came to earth from heaven at the moment of the miraculous conception of His human nature in the womb of the virgin Mary, having been sent by the First Person of the Trinity for the purposes of redemption.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: Existence

- ▶ Christ existed before creation and in fact the Scriptures identify Him as the agent in Creation. Colossians 1:16 All things were created through Him and for Him.
- ▶ He possessed divine glory before the world existed (John 17:5).
- ▶ He experienced the Father's love (John 17:24).
- ▶ He is eternal in His nature and existence (John 1:1).
- ▶ Hebrews 1:10 "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

Pre-Incarnate Christ: Sonship

- ▶ The Eternal Son of God
- ▶ Christ is identified as “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6).
- ▶ The perfect equality and eternality that exists between Father and Son can be confusing and has led to 2 views: eternal sonship and incarnational sonship.
- ▶ Incarnational sonship concludes that sonship indicates the place of voluntary submission to which Christ condescended at His incarnation.
- ▶ Eternal sonship sees that the title “Son of God” is applied to Christ to show His equality with God and His essential deity, not His voluntary submission to the Father. (Person, not position).

Pre-Incarnate Christ: Sonship

- ▶ John 5:18 demonstrates that the Jewish leaders understood a claim to be the Son of God was a claim of deity (equality with God) and therefore blasphemous.
- ▶ “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”
- ▶ If Jesus’ sonship signifies His deity and absolute equality with the Father, it cannot be a title that pertains only to His incarnation but must apply to the eternal attributes of Christ, not merely the human attributes He assumed.
- ▶ The begetting of Jesus as the Son of God in Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1 is not an event that takes place in time and speaks to His position, eternally, within the Godhead.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: OT Appearances

- ▶ Theophany (an appearance of God) involves the presence of God in an instance of divine manifestation upon the earth.
- ▶ In Scripture references are made to the “Angel of the Lord,” identifying a messenger of Yahweh as Yahweh. See Gen. 16:7-13; Exodus 3:2-4; Judges 6:11-23.
- ▶ Each Theophany reveals something about God and His will for the recipient of the manifestation of His presence. When it is the Second Person who appears we see Christ appearing in human form prior to His birth.
- ▶ These appearances must have been the Son in the Old Testament because the New Testament tells us no one has seen the Father (John 5:37; 6:46).

Pre-Incarnate Christ: OT Appearances

- ▶ Christ appeared to Job, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, Isaiah, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego along with Nebuchadnezzar.
- ▶ He killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers outside of Jerusalem.
- ▶ He appeared as a man, an angel, fire in the burning bush, a pillar of smoke and fire to Abraham and to the nation of Israel, and a rock that gave water in the wilderness.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: OT Works

- ▶ The works of the Second Person in the Old Testament include creation, providence, revelation, and judgment. These are acts of deity revealing that He is God.
- ▶ Creation: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (John 1:3). See also John 1:10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10.
- ▶ Providence: This is the care of God over His creation. The Son participated in the initiation of creation and the plan of redemption. He is presented as a Shepherd (Psalm 23) who cares for and provides for His people (John 10:11).
- ▶ Revelation: The words of Scripture are inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), being God-breathed. So it is not the writers, but the writing that is inspired. The Son often appeared in the Old Testament to convey a message (Words) from God.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: OT Works

- ▶ Revelation (cont'd): After these things the word of the Lord appeared to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." – Genesis 15:1
- ▶ Judgment: The Son of God will judge the wicked and the righteous (Matt. 25:31, 41; 2 Cor. 5:10). John 5:22 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, 23 that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.
- ▶ The Son of God and Son of Man, truly God and truly Man, is fit to judge mankind as He was tempted like us, yet without sin.

Pre-Incarnate Christ: OT Prophecies

- ▶ Old Testament Prophecies declare things about Christ in the Old Testament before He fulfills them in the New.
- ▶ Jesus tells us that the Scriptures “bear witness about Me” (John 5:39), and after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus, He showed all Scripture pointing to Him and why He had come. “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).
- ▶ Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament, 27 in one day between the time He was betrayed until He was buried.