

## INTRODUCTION

### The Centrality of Jesus Christ

“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’” (Matt. 16:15).

Karl Barth said that Christology is the touchstone of all theology. He wrote in his *Dogmatics in Outline*, “Tell me how it stands with your Christology, and I shall tell you who you are.”

**Fundamental to the Faith.** The doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christianity. Christianity is itself a *revealed* religion. Christianity is itself preeminently a *redemptive* religion, a “sinner’s” religion. God has determined to manifest His glory in human history by means of rescuing ill-deserving sinners from their guilt and judgment and bringing them to Himself. This God-glorifying saving work is carried out and centers upon His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It may be summed up in Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:19, “**God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.**”

*“Jesus is not presented as the first Christian or as the Founder of the Christian Religion. As the Lamb brought to the slaughter and the Lord at the right hand of God, as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah and the Prince of Life, He is the sum total of all that Christianity means”* (McDonald, 65).

Upon distinguishing Jesus from every other “founder” or “first confessor” of the various human-originated religious systems, Herman Bavinck pointedly wrote, “*Christ is Christianity itself; He stands not outside of it but in its center; without His name, person and work, there is no Christianity left. In a word, Christ does not point out the way of salvation: He is the way itself.*”

How are we to think of Him? As He is revealed in the inspired Scriptures.

**Two New Testament “Hymns”:** Colossians 1:15-20 and 1 Timothy 3:16.

A Hymn of Supremacy--“Christ Supreme”—Colossians 1:15-20

- I. Supreme Over Creation, vv. 15-17.
  - A. Supremacy Declared, v. 15.
    1. Glorious as the Revealer of God.
    2. Glorious as the Sovereign Over All.
  - B. Supremacy Demonstrated, vv. 16-17.
    1. Glorious as the Agent of All Creation.
    2. Glorious as the Goal of All Creation.
    3. Glorious as the Sustainer of All Creation.
- II. Supreme Over New Creation, vv. 18-20.
  - A. Supremacy Declared, v. 18.
    1. Glorious as the Sovereign of the Church
    2. Glorious as the Beginning of All to Come.

- B. Supremacy Demonstrated, vv. 19-20.
1. Glorious as the Resource of Saving Grace
  2. Glorious as the Reconciler of the Cosmos

A Hymn of Salvation--“Christ Savior”—1 Timothy 3:16

In this little hymn the “soul and marrow” of Christianity is contained. And that “soul and marrow” is nothing less than the great Christ who is its central subject.

- **“He who was revealed in the flesh.”** Incarnation, Identification, Substitution and Crucifixion. (John 1:1, 14; Matt. 1:21; Heb. 2:14)
- **“Was vindicated in the Spirit.”** Anointed, Acknowledged, Attested and Approved. (Luke 1:35; 4:18-19; John 1:32-34; 3:34; Rom. 1:4)
- **“Beheld by angels.”** Anticipated, Attended, and Adored. (1 Peter 1:12; Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43; 24:4-6; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 5:11-12)
- **“Proclaimed among the nations.”** Announced. (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 10:36-43; 13:38-39)
- **“Believed on in the world.”** Trusted and Embraced (Acts 5:14; 8:12, 37; 11:21; 13:48; 14:1; 16:14, 34; 17:12; 18:8; 19:18).
- **“Taken up into glory.”** Ascended and Exalted. (Phil. 2:9)

*“Right from the start, historic Christianity has conceived the Christhood of Jesus in terms of His being the divine person whom the Father sent from heaven to become incarnate, to serve our race as prophet, priest, and king under conditions of humiliation, culminating in a redemptive death, then to rise, return to glory, and rule directly over the cosmos on His Father’s behalf, imparting salvation to those for whom He won it, and thus creating and building up His church, until He reappears for resurrection, restoration, and retribution on judgment day” (J. I. Packer, *The Glory of Christ*).*

**Fundamental for Our Faith.** The Christian life *“is grounded in and thrives on a right appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ” (Zaspel).*

*“No man ever thought too much of Christ” (J. C. Ryle)*

It is the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, wrote the Puritan John Owen, that is *“one of the greatest privileges and advantages of believers both in this world and unto eternity.”* Another has said that *“the personal glory of the Lord Jesus is to the Bible what the sun is to our planet,”* that what the Church of God requires collectively and needs individually is a *“frequent repose and devout meditation within the hallowed temple of the Redeemer’s glory. The more closely we contemplate it, and the more transforming and assimilating its influence upon our minds, the better we shall be fitted--and the more successful will be our labors--to go forth and invite others to its study and win them to its love” (Winslow).*

- It is a *conforming* contemplation. “**But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**” (2 Cor. 3:18).
- It is a *comforting* contemplation (cf. Heb. 3:1).
- It is a *consecrating* contemplation. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul refers to the gospel as “**the gospel of the glory of Christ.**” This is one of the distinctive marks of a Christian, that he “sees” glory in Christ, Christ is all-glorious to Him (cf. Phil. 3--all things loss in view of Christ; Heb. 12:2-3).
- It is a *constraining* contemplation. We shall be partakers of glory.

This glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is multifaceted. Like Joseph’s robe it is variegated. What I propose is to consider this glory of the Lord Jesus Christ under four broad and interrelated headings: (1) His eternal glory--the generally hidden personal essential glory He possessed from eternity past to His incarnation; (2) His eclipsed glory--the glory of His unique person in coming to this sin-cursed world to redeem it; (3) His exalted glory--the glory He now possesses in His session at God’s right hand; and (4) His eschatological glory--the glory He will display at His second coming.

One has written well:

*Christ is glorious.  
Christ is very glorious.  
Christ is most glorious.  
Christ is always glorious.  
Christ is altogether glorious.*