

Editorial: Christological Reflections: Biblical and Historical

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At a crucial turning point in Jesus' ministry, he asked his disciples the famous question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt 16:13). Indeed, the answer to this question is the most important answer that can be given to any question. Why? For this simple yet profound reason: Our Lord Jesus Christ is nothing less than the eternal Son, the second person of the Godhead, who has assumed our human nature and as such, utterly unique in his person and work. In fact, apart from Christ's work for us, there is no salvation, life, and eternal joy since he alone is Lord and Savior. As such, apart from a proper articulation, confession, and faith in him alone we stand under his judgment, and there is no hope for us in this life and the life to come.

In light of Scripture's teaching and the confessional orthodoxy of the church regarding who Jesus is and what he has done for us, there is no greater need for the church today than to think rightly and deeply about Jesus biblically,

theologically, and in light of church history. The life and health of the church are directly dependent on a sound and faithful Christology, rooted and grounded in an accurate theology proper. Yet, it must also be stressed, the church does not merely need an accurate Christology confessed, but also one that leads us to faith, trust, and confidence in our Lord Jesus, and an entire life lived in adoration, praise, and obedience to him.

Again, why this is so should be obvious to us if we have understood what Scripture teaches regarding our triune God in the face of the incarnate Son. Given that Jesus is the divine Son, the eternal “Word made flesh” (John 1:1, 14), in him alone is life and life eternal (John 17:3). Repeatedly Scripture reminds us that in Christ alone, all of God’s sovereign purposes find their fulfillment (Heb 1:1–3). As Paul beautifully reminds us, in Christ alone, God’s eternal plan is to bring “all things in heaven and on earth” under Christ’s headship (Eph 1:9–10), which has already begun in his first coming and which will be consummated in his return. Jesus, the incarnate divine Son, is central to God’s eternal plan and new creation work. Indeed, as Paul reminds us in his famous Christological hymn: the eternal Son is not only the one through whom the Father has created, but the very purpose of creation is ultimately “for him” (Col 1:16).

Given the centrality of Christ in Scripture and theology, it is not surprising that to misidentify him is a serious matter; indeed, a matter of life and death. In fact, at the heart of *all* heresy and false understandings of the Gospel and Christian theology is a distortion or denial of Christ. One’s Christology is a test case for one’s entire theology and understanding of the Christian faith. The more our Christology is off from the biblical teaching, especially in terms of his unique, exclusive identity and all-sufficient work, the more our theology will be wrong in other areas. “Ideas have consequences,” and the most central “idea” to get right is *who* Jesus is in relation to the triune God and *what* he does for us in his entire life, death, resurrection, ascension, and ultimately his return. There are many beliefs that distinguish Christianity from other worldviews, but none more central and significant as *who* Jesus is and *what* he does for us.

Thinking through all that Scripture says about Jesus, wrestling with the church as she has sought to faithfully confess Christ, is not an easy task but it is absolutely necessary, especially if we are going to think rightly about God, the Gospel, and the entire Christian faith. The study of Christology is not

reserved for academic theologians; it is the privilege, responsibility, and glory of every Christian. The Christian life and the Christian ministry is about knowing God in truth, believing and obeying God's Word in our lives, and being vigilant for the truth of the Gospel by "demolishing arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).

For these reasons (and many more), our focus in this issue of *SBJT* is to return once again to reflect on the person and work of Christ from Scripture and historical theology. Indeed, we must never grow tired of doing so. In a wide-ranging set of articles, the person and work of Christ is articulated for today's church. Standing on the shoulders of theological giants from the past such as Ignatius, Francis Turretin, Andrew Fuller, and John Fawcett, our forebearers have much to teach us about how to express and defend the glories of Christ in the midst of opposition and denial. In addition, biblical and theological reflection on Christ's the true image of God and his relationship to us as the *imago Dei* is crucial in Christological formulation, along with how a classical Christology is to be applied to such issues as suffering and counseling.

The aim of this issue of *SBJT* is to call the church back to what is central: the glory of Christ. My prayer is that these articles will help equip the church to know better who Jesus is and what he has done for us from Scripture and historical theology so that in spending time thinking about the glory and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, this issue will lead to a renewed delight to know and proclaim Christ and him alone (Col 1:28). The church first exists to know and proclaim the glory of the triune God in the face of Christ, and a move away from *this* center will always result in theological and spiritual disaster for the church. May it never be so for us.