

Understanding Christian Apologetics

Lesson 2: Setting Apart Christ as Lord

I. Christ's Lordship: the Foundation of Christian Apologetics¹

- A. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV)
- B. God is absolutely independent of his creation
 - 1. The divine name "Yahweh" ('I AM') explains that God is self-existent
 - 2. God did not create the world because he needed anything
- C. At the same time, God has chosen to commit himself to his creation
 - 1. "The God who is in need of nothing is also the God who is 'with us' to move and act in the world, including to *reveal himself*, in order to carry out his perfect plan."²
 - 2. At the burning bush (Ex. 3), the fact that the fire did not consume the bush for fuel testified to God's independence; the fact that the fire was in the bush showed that God had bound himself to his people
- D. God reveals himself to people through his Son, "who is God over all" (Rom. 9:5)
 - 1. Jesus' cosmic lordship: he has ruled creation from the beginning because the life that all people possess is dependent on him, and this life in and of itself carries the light of the knowledge of God (see Jn. 1:9; Acts 17:28)
 - 2. Jesus' redemptive lordship: upon the completion of his redemptive work, God has highly exalted him to the place of redemptive

¹ This section is based on chapter 2 of *Covenantal Apologetics* by K. Scott Oliphint

² Oliphint, 59.

authority at his right hand (see Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:1-4; Rev. 5)

- E. The fact that God has condescended to reveal himself means that “every person, by virtue of being made in God’s image and living in God’s world, *knows* God... Whether we suppress that knowledge (in Adam) or rejoice in it (in Christ), in either case we know him. And that knowledge is, in either case, indicative of our covenant status before him.”³
- F. All knowledge is derived from God — Augustine of Hippo said that “God’s revelation is the sun from which all other light derives.”⁴

II. Living as Ambassadors for Christ the Lord⁵

- A. ““Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others... “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:11a, 20 ESV)
- B. Setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts enables us to engage in apologetics from a standpoint of relaxed diplomacy and friendly curiosity
- C. Essential qualities of an effective ambassador
 1. Sound knowledge of the kingdom you represent
 2. Skillful wisdom to help you use your knowledge to advocate for the kingdom in the most persuasive manner
 3. An attractive manner — “our character can make or break our mission. Knowledge and wisdom are packaged in a person, so to speak. If that person does not embody the virtues of the kingdom he serves, he will undermine his message and handicap his efforts.”⁶

³ Oliphint, 70, 71.

⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 298.

⁵ This section is based on chapter 1 of *Tactics* by Gregory Koukl.

⁶ Koukl, 25.

- D. Cultivate good listening skills and look for openings to practice some 'friendly curiosity'
1. Use questions to ask the person to clarify what they mean so that an area of weakness is exposed
 2. "find clever ways to exploit someone's bad thinking for the purpose of guiding her to the truth, yet remaining gracious and charitable at the same time."⁷
 3. Maintain a relaxed composure by reminding yourself of the Lordship of Christ — "facts and sound reason are on our side. Most people, even the smart ones, don't give much thought to their opposition to Christianity."⁸
 4. Remember that it is always permissible to admit that you need time to think about something that the other person has said

⁷ Koukl, 28.

⁸ Koukl, 28.