

Proper Christology in the Church

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – The need for a proper view of Christ within the church as it faces rising opposition
2. aim – To cause us to withstand opposition by making Jesus Christ the supreme object of the church
3. passage – Matthew 16:13-24

b. outline

1. The Need for a Proper Christology in the Church
2. The Proof of a Proper Christology in the Church
3. The Results of a Proper Christology in the Church

c. overview

1. the **origination** of this message
 - a. I originally delivered a similar sermon in 2007 to a conference of fundamentalist pastors in MO
 - b. but ... so much has changed since then, so I will make the same *point*, **but in a different way ...**

I. The Need for a Proper Christology in the Church

Content

a. the reality of God's judgment

1. **IMO:** we are living in a time of **unprecedented judgment** by God upon America (and the West)
 - a. **i.e.** God is *lifting his hand of restraint*, very consistent with the pattern outlined in **Romans 1**
 - b. first, men suppress the knowledge of their Creator, and become futile in their thinking (**vv. 21ff**)
 1. **e.g.** men decide that human beings are nothing but “evolved animals” and they inculcate the “religion” of secularism into 2-3 generations of school children
 - c. second, God gives them up (over) to every kind of physical and sexual impurity (**vv. 24ff**)
 1. **e.g.** the sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's spawns the great moral revolution of the 2000's, leading to the establishment of “gay marriage” as “law,” and to the rebellion of transgenderism
 - d. finally, God gives them up (over) to a depraved mind and every kind of wickedness (**vv. 28ff**)
 1. **e.g.** the absolute *insanity* of the thinking process in politics, academia, media, entertainment, pop culture, and even the church, including “CRT” (**i.e.** racism disguised as anti-racism)
 - e. **IOW:** America is experiencing *vividly* the downward spiral of judgment – **it is obvious**
2. **principle: judgment is God giving to a man what he wants, including its consequences**
 - a. **IOW:** the reprobate man *desires* to be autonomous, to be “out from under” from the restrictions of the law of God – he *wants* to be God and to make up his own rules for living
 - b. **i.e.** he *wants* the lie of Satan in the Garden to be true: he wants to be able to “shake off” the constraints of holiness demanded by the Creator *to do whatever his fleshly heart wants to do*
 - c. **e.g.** hell (then) is God giving to the reprobate man what he wants: to be “free” from the restraints of God's law to rebel against him *receiving the due punishment for his desires*
 1. **James White:** a man plucked from hell after 10,000 years *will go back* if asked to love the law
 - d. America *wants* to be free from God, so God is giving to this nation *exactly what it wants* – and the consequences of such desire is a “freight train” of destruction (**i.e.** economic woe, global loss of moral authority, foreign invasion, loss of cohesion, corrupt leadership, mental illness)
 1. **IMO:** the “continuing” nature of the pandemic is an **active** part of this judgment, for it is a people *knowing* that they deserve death for their rejection of God and being forced to “cower” in fear

b. the survival of God's judgment

1. **question:** how are we, as the church, as followers of Jesus Christ, **to pass through this judgment?**
 - a. or, how will we, as the remnant, survive as judgment sweeps us up with the wicked?
 - b. **note:** much of this cultural wickedness has *already* penetrated the “church” (**e.g.** sexual confusion)
 1. so, how does the *true church*, the church that desires to be *faithful*, go through this time
2. **popular answer:** the church will need to find ways to exist “outside” of the current cultural milieu, developing *communities* in which Christians can support one another uniquely (**e.g. Rod Dreher**)
 - a. I agree with Dreher's assessment of the culture, and his solutions are not without merit; but I find his conclusions to be *missing a component: a theological (Christological) element*
 1. **i.e.** his solutions are very *practical*, but there is a *deeper problem* that must be addressed *first*

2. **IOW:** if the church is *already* being infiltrated by the culture, then wouldn't a "community" solution just be a "smaller" version of the same issues (e.g. women in leadership)
3. **note:** as a converted Catholic to Orthodoxy, can Dreher provide a theological answer??
3. **Christological answer (thesis): the true church passes through judgment by being utterly centered on Jesus Christ, where he (and he alone!) is the absolute object of affection for its members and where obedience and loyalty to him are paramount – a proper Christology**
 - a. **IOW:** the true church faces the realities of the world around it by focusing its mind, eyes, ears, and heart upon Jesus Christ – it *passes through* judgment by keeping its focus *on him*
 - b. to prove this thesis, I want to take us into a *familiar* passage of Scripture ... **(not exegeted)**

II. The Proof of a Proper Christology in the Church

Content

a. understanding the nature of Christ (Matthew 16:13-20)

1. Jesus begins by asking his disciples "*who do people say that the Son of Man is [or I am]?*"
 - a. **the disciples:** maybe a reincarnated Jeremiah, a returned Elijah, a raised John the Baptist
 - b. **us today:** in secularism, an ahistorical holy-man; in Islam: a prophet less than Muhammed; in Catholicism: a mystical bread; in E Orthodoxy: a vision of God as an image; in liberalism: a social justice warrior; in evangelicalism: a friend in time of need; in Pentecostalism: a ticket to prosperity
 - c. **IOW:** men see Jesus *as they want to see him*; what *they* want him to be
2. so, Jesus asks the \$64,000 question: "*who do you say that I am?*"
 - a. **note:** this is the question at the heart of my thesis: how do we, *as the church*, understand Jesus?
 - b. which causes Peter to make his great confession: "*you are the Christ, the Son of the living God*"
 1. a **foundational confession** of who Jesus *really is* – **not a human ideal**, but God himself
 2. **i.e.** as understood through *revelation*: Yahweh in the flesh, God incarnate, the Creator in person
 3. **i.e.** this understanding of Jesus is only available to those *to whom it has been revealed*
3. thus, Jesus connects this to the church: an organism built upon this *confession of faith at its core*
 - a. **note:** not *Peter* (as per Catholics as a play-on-words), but upon the profession that Jesus is God
 1. the fact that Peter has to be rebuked in the next paragraph utterly denies the Catholic tenet
 - b. **principle: a proper Christology in the church begins with a true understanding of who Jesus has been revealed to us to be – the revelation that Jesus is Yahweh in the flesh is the foundation (cornerstone) of the church – the "rock" upon which the church is built**
 - c. **the Christian passes through the judgment by truly knowing who Jesus is ...**

b. understanding the works of Christ (Matthew 16:21-23)

1. later, Jesus speaks to his disciples about his mission: going to Jerusalem, suffering and dying
 - a. ironically (**see above**), Peter *rebukes* Jesus for this, that this should "*never happen*"
 - b. **IOW:** Peter rebukes Jesus for not going down the path that *he* wants – not a path of *suffering and death* (and, thus, atonement), but another (**i.e.** a path of *kingship and rule over Rome*)
2. but, Jesus rebukes *Peter*, *literally* referring to him as Satan (and pushing him *behind*)
 - a. **i.e.** people want a "Jesus" that solves *earthly problems*, is our *friend*, makes our life "fulfilling"
 - b. to *expect* Jesus to act *according to our purpose and desire* (and other than what he was sent to accomplish) is utterly satanic – it is to "deflect" from the *real purpose* of God in Christ
 - c. **principle: a proper Christology in the church teaches a true understanding of what Christ came to do, as sent by the Father – the reality that Jesus has come, not to bring us happiness, but to satisfy the deepest need we have: our atonement for sin and death**
 - d. **the Christian passes through the judgment by truly knowing what Jesus did ...**

c. understanding the call of Christ (Matthew 16:24)

1. finally, Jesus tells his disciples that the true way for a Christian to follow him is to "*deny himself, take up his cross [daily] and follow*" him in obedience, willing (even) to lose his life
 - a. **i.e.** the call of Christ upon the Christian is a call to **self-martyrdom** = to walking the path of death
 1. it is **not** to "accept Jesus into your heart" or make a "profession" of faith or look to Jesus as an example of helping others – it is to walk the path of *utter self-sacrifice, even unto death*
 2. to follow Christ *in utter obedience*, as he did along the Via Dolorosa – to obey him *even when it costs us every good thing in this life* – to "die to self" and to be conformed to holiness
 - b. **e.g. Dreher's** response re: the university administrator questioned by a lesbian about her nature as a Christian: "He should never have answered that woman's question, *obviously*, ..."
(quoted from <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/warning-about-woke-workplace>, Monday, August 23, 2021, 10:42p; *emphasis mine*)
 1. such a response is **utter cowardice** – the truth of lesbianism being an abomination before the *Imago Dei*, along with the gospel message of *repent*, is offensive to the reprobate heart

2. the follower of Christ is called to articulate such “offensiveness” when confronted by the wickedness around us – this is **obedience and loyalty to Christ**
- c. **principle: a proper Christology in the church advocates a true understanding of what Christ demands of us, in the gospel – the call that Jesus places over us, to follow him in utter loyalty and allegiance even if it means we lose everything in this world**
- d. **the Christian passes through the judgment by truly knowing what Jesus demands ...**

III. The Results of a Proper Christology in the Church

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a. the results of a proper Christology

1. **again: judgment is God giving to a man what he wants, including its consequences**
 - a. **LOW:** the reprobate man *desires* to be autonomous, to be “out from under” from the restrictions of the law of God – he *wants* to be God and to make up his own rules for living
 - b. so ... God lifts his hand of restraint, of mercy, of love, and sends the man away to “gnash his teeth” *for eternity* over the fact that he will *never be God*, and he will never experience *good* again
2. **question: what does God give, in his judgment, to the man who has been born again?**
 - a. **i.e.** what does the man who is a “*new creation in Christ*” receive; what does the man whose heart of stone has been replaced by a “heart of flesh” truly desire? what does God give *him*?
 - b. **answer: such a man, who possesses the heart that loves Jesus, is given Jesus!!**
 1. the elect man *desires* to know Christ, he knows what God has revealed, he understands the work of Christ *on his behalf*, and he *wants* to follow Jesus by the power of the Spirit
 2. thus, in judgment over him, God grants him *fully* the desire of his heart – Jesus Christ *himself*
 - c. **e.g.** at the Great White Throne, the only ones who will stand on his right are those who:
 1. know *who he is* (**i.e.** who have confessed his name before men as Lord)
 2. know *what he has done* (**i.e.** who cling to his atonement as their only hope)
 3. and who *demonstrate unyielding allegiance to him in obedience* (**i.e.** which their earthly deeds show from the books opened before Christ; **Rev. 20:12**)
 - d. thus, we pass through the *current judgment* coming against our culture **in the same way**
 1. we need to be *more* than “counter-cultural” in how we *survive* (**e.g.** in community) – we need to be *counter-cultural* in how we understand Jesus – **i.e.** “who do you say that I am?”
 2. **we need to be so centered upon Christ, so Christocentric in our thinking, that we clearly stand out from the world, and offer a very counter-cultural message to those around us**
 3. and, in the end, God will give us what we desire: the Christ, the Son of the Living God
 - e. **we need to be absolutely sure that the church has embraced a full and proper Christology in order to stand firm in this day of judgment**