

First New Testament Summary Study of Christ and Salvation in the New Testament

"Christology" means the "study of Christ" and in the history of Christianity represents a sacred study, a sacred analysis and discussion. The reason is evident from the New Testament itself. John 14:6 records Christ answering, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." Acts 4:12 states, "There is no other name given unto man under heaven by which we must be saved." Christology is therefore dedicated to the study of Jesus Christ. In particular, the study of WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus has done, is doing and will do. That is christology studies the PERSON and WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament is invaluable for informing the reader and/or hearer about Jesus Christ. Even more than that, however, the Word of God/the Word of Christ imparts saving faith (Romans 10:17). Thus it is inappropriate to reduce the New Testament to that which simply transmits information (historical, sacred or otherwise). Those who receive the Word of Christ as a means of grace, receive the real God-given connector through which saving faith is created and through which the Holy Spirit gives new life (when and where He pleases). Romans 10:17 records, "Consequently, faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." This depicts the enormous importance of the New Testament. It is (with the Old Testament) the vehicle through which Christ comes to people. As this Word of Christ comes, it reveals to people WHO He is and again, His WORK (His ministry) to and for all people. It is the prayer of the Church, Christ's Church, that all would come to saving faith in Jesus Christ and not simply view this Word of Christ as just another message or idea that is "out there." Getting back to christology, however, the New Testament itself is of monumental importance. It's lucidity in bringing the revelation of Jesus Christ is exciting and powerful. Prof. Middendorf in the book *Called By The Gospel* does an excellent job in conveying important themes in chapter 1 and 7. The portrait of Jesus Christ is different in the various books of the New Testament, but these are not contradictory, but complementary. The illustration of a mosaic is outstanding. The pieces belong together and yet at the same time -- as Prof. Middendorf says -- this does not mean that the "pieces" do not stand alone. They do. Anyone may "get to know" Jesus Christ from any of the sacred writers who contributed (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to the New Testament.

To know Christ is to know how one may be saved or rescued from sin, death and the power of the devil. This in itself presupposes the New Testament worldview that people are not merely physical beings. There is a real dualism that exists in human beings in respect to the body and the soul. This view is contrary to philosophical materialism or naturalism which holds that all that exists is material (e.g. the saying, "all that matters is matter"). There is more to life than merely the physical. People are also spiritual and according to the New Testament worldview, a person's spirit will endure (not to mention the crucial fact that our bodies will also rise again since God loves His whole creation). The critical question is, "Where will it endure or *in what state* will it endure?" According to the teaching of the New Testament all lives are negatively impacted by the spiritual disease

called "sin," by evil influences in the world, and by Satan (and his demons) which stand against humanity, especially those who seek Christ. Needless to say, *how* people can be saved and rescued is a vital revelation to say the least. This field is called "soteriology" on how salvation flows directly from christology. That is in speaking of WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus has done, is doing and will do, this christology reveals the basis for soteriology as the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are given in and through Jesus Christ. For example, the fact that Christ is God (a fact of christology) means that he has the power and authority to save all people (a crucial component of soteriology); and the fact that Christ is a man (another fact of christology) means that he had the real and legitimate ability to be a holy substitute and representative for all other people with flesh and blood (another vital part of soteriology). Furthermore, through this salvation in Christ, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and makes holy those who have faith in Christ. To be sanctified means that after justification (when a person receives salvation) the Holy Spirit increases faith, strengthens love, and the image of God is renewed in the one who is in Christ (though that image is never perfected in this life). In order to understand these concepts, however, we need a proper system of interpretation ("hermeneutics"), please read pg. 13f in *Called By The Gospel*. You will see the three vital parts that we must consider in order to conduct the proper interpretation of Scripture, namely taking into consideration the author, text, and receptor. While it is true that as receptors we are subjective human beings, this does not mean that we must succumb to relativism (the idea that all interpretations and opinions are equally valid and "true"). Please do not misinterpret Middendorf on p. 15: "This means no one who reads the New Testament is completely impartial or objective." Just because we are subjective beings (not totally objective in and of ourselves), does not mean that we cannot arrive to an objective (and accurate) interpretation of a text. The reason for this is that there are objective tools which counter our subjective thoughts. These tools include archaeology that provide an objective standard for understanding (namely real artifacts that shed light upon and define biblical descriptions of people, regions, empires, coinage, tools, weapons, etc.). In addition, there is the wealth of early church attestation of the meaning of texts. The collective tradition of witnesses provides deeper insight for objective meaning. You know the saying, "two heads are better than one." Furthermore (thirdly), we have the principles of exegesis and hermeneutics as objective fields of study. For example, words have specific meanings and ranges of meaning. Various genres (shared forms of communication like poetry, wisdom literature, historical narrative, apocalyptic literature, etc.) have specific characteristics as well. When such external objective aspects are applied to the text, then we are not left in the mud and mire of relativism. For example, because we know something about the Greek language, when Jesus says in Matthew 5:48: "Be perfect," we know in terms of a grammatical fact that He was not saying to be morally perfect in every respect (to be without fault in any way). Rather, He was saying "be complete" in the way you treat people. If you would give your neighbor some bread, be prepared to give a stranger some bread as well. That is, imitate God. He sends rain and sun to the believer and the unbeliever, so love and serve people across the board. Don't practice favoritism. John 3:16 says "For God loved the world," not "For God loved some, many, or most people." Because of these facts, it is not appropriate to infer that Scripture should be interpreted relativistically. If we form a big circle with a bunch of people and decide that Bible Study should be done by reading Scripture and then going around the circle for each person to answer the question, "What does this Scripture mean to you?" with the inference that everyone's opinion is equally valid, then we treat Scripture relativistically

and throw out objective tools. This is indeed a very dangerous way of approaching Scripture. We would never treat our day-to-day communication this way. If we did, chaos would ensue. In Christ,
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