

# FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

*Systematic Theology Series*

---

## CHRISTOLOGY

*The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ*

### UNIT 11: CONCLUSION — THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN ALL THINGS

#### Lesson 32

## The Name Above Every Name

### Beholding the Glory of Christ

*The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End*

*Key Texts: Colossians 1:15–20; Philippians 1:21; 2:9–11; Revelation 5:9–14; Hebrews 13:8*

*“Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain to Receive Power and Riches and Wisdom and Might and Honor and Glory and Blessing”*

---

#### Dr. Joshua Nichols

*Pastor, Theologian, Author*  
faithfultotheword.com

#### SERIES VERSE

*“For we do not preach ourselves  
but Christ Jesus as Lord,  
and ourselves as your bond-servants  
on account of Jesus.”*

**2 CORINTHIANS 4:5, NASB 1995**

## INTRODUCTION

---

We have arrived. After thirty-one lessons traversing the most majestic, most demanding, and most inexhaustible subject that any creature made in the image of God can pursue, the study of Jesus Christ Himself — as He has condescended to reveal Himself in the inspired and inerrant pages of Holy Scripture — we stand at the summit. And as is fitting for the summit of any great ascent, the view from here does not primarily direct our eyes back down the mountain we have climbed, surveying all the terrain we have covered. It directs our eyes upward and forward, toward the one who has been the object of every lesson, the center of every doctrine, and the destination of every argument. This final lesson does not introduce a new doctrine; it gathers up everything we have studied and places it before the face of the one who is the reason all of it was worth studying.

The Colossian hymn with which this lesson begins has appeared throughout this series as its most comprehensive Christological text: the pre-existent Son as the image of the invisible God (Lesson 3), the Creator of all things (Lesson 3), the firstborn from the dead (Lesson 26), and the one in whom all things hold together (Lessons 3 and 31). In this final lesson, the hymn is revisited not as a doctrinal text to be analyzed but as a doxological text to be inhabited — the song of a community that has sat with the Person and Work of Christ for thirty-two lessons and that can now sing it with the depth and the joy of those who know more than they did when they began. Christology does not terminate in information; it terminates in adoration. The purpose of this series has been, from its very first lesson, not the accumulation of theological credentials but the formation of worshipping hearts — hearts that know more of Christ because they know Him better, and that love Him more because they understand more fully what He has done.

This concluding lesson examines the supremacy of Christ across six domains: in creation, in redemption, in the church, in Scripture, in the believer's life, and in eternity. Together these six domains constitute the most comprehensive possible account of the universal, unchallenged, and eternally expanding supremacy of the one whose name is above every name. The lesson closes with a meditation on the closing verse of the series: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever' (Hebrews 13:8, NASB 1995) — the immutability of the one who is the same across all the theological terrain this series has covered and across all the eschatological territory that lies ahead.

## I. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN CREATION

---

*The Colossian Hymn Revisited — All Things Were Made Through Him and for Him*

### A. The Image of the Invisible God

Colossians 1:15–17 returns us to the beginning — not the beginning of this series (Lesson 1) but the beginning of all things: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (NASB 1995). The Colossian hymn establishes the supremacy of Christ in creation under four inseparable affirmations: He is the image of the invisible God (the visible revelation of the invisible divine Person); He is the firstborn of all creation (not the first creature but the one who holds the position of supreme authority and inheritance over the entire created order, as established in Lesson 26); all things were created through Him and for Him (He is both the agent and the goal of creation); and in Him all things hold together (He is the cosmic cohesion — the reason the universe does not dissolve into chaos).

The phrase ‘for Him’ (εἰς αὐτόν, eis auton) in Colossians 1:16 is the most cosmologically significant prepositional phrase in all of Scripture: all things were created not merely through Christ (He is the agent) but for Christ (He is the goal). The creation exists for Christ. Every galaxy, every atom, every human being, every act of beauty and justice and love in the entire history of the cosmos exists for the one in whom all things were created. The supremacy of Christ in creation is not an afterthought; it is the deepest structure of reality, the teleological foundation of everything that exists. To study Christology is not to study a department of theology alongside other departments; it is to study the organizing center of all reality — the one for whom, through whom, and in whom everything is.

## **B. Creation’s Witness to Its Lord**

The supremacy of Christ in creation means that every created thing is, in the deepest sense, a witness to its Lord. The beauty of the natural world, the complexity of the human person, the moral order inscribed in the conscience of every creature, the capacity for love and language and worship that distinguishes humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom — all of these are not incidental features of a universe that happens to exist; they are the marks of the Creator who made the universe for Himself. Romans 1:20 established in this series the general revelation that bears witness to the Creator; but the Christological account of creation deepens and personalizes that witness. The creation bears witness not merely to an abstract divine power but to the specific Person of the Son, in whom all things were created and for whom they exist. The study of creation is, in its deepest dimension, the study of the one for whom it was made.

## **II. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN REDEMPTION**

---

*He Is the Author, the Means, and the End of Salvation*

## A. The Full Arc of Redemption in Christ

The supremacy of Christ in redemption is the central theme of the entire Christology series, and the thirty-one lessons that have preceded this one have worked through it with the sustained attention and the theological precision that it demands. But the full arc of the redemptive supremacy is best seen in its compressed, doxological form: Colossians 1:18–20 declares that Christ is ‘the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross’ (NASB 1995). The redemptive supremacy encompasses three dimensions: He is the beginning of the new creation (the resurrection as the firstfruits, Lesson 26), the means of the reconciliation (the blood of the cross, Lessons 20–24), and the goal toward which the reconciliation moves (first place in everything, the cosmic consummation, Lesson 31).

The supremacy of Christ in redemption is the supremacy of the one who did not merely provide the resources for redemption but who is Himself the Redeemer — who took on human flesh (Lesson 6), who bore the penalty of human sin in His own body (Lesson 21), who rose from the dead as the firstborn from the dead (Lesson 25), who ascended to the right hand of the Father (Lesson 28), who intercedes for His people without ceasing (Lesson 29), who will return in glory (Lessons 30–31), and who will receive the redeemed into the eternal face-to-face communion of the new creation (Lesson 32). He is the author, the means, and the end of salvation — the one from whom the redemption proceeds, through whom it is accomplished, and in whom it is finally and fully received. There is no salvation that is not salvation in Him, through Him, and for Him.

*“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” | “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” | “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”*

**COLOSSIANS 1:17; PHILIPPIANS 1:21; REVELATION 5:12, NASB 1995**

## III. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

*He Is the Head of the Body, the Chief Shepherd, the Cornerstone*

### A. Head, Shepherd, and Cornerstone

The supremacy of Christ in the church is expressed through three inseparable metaphors that together constitute the most comprehensive possible account of Christ’s relationship to the community He redeemed and for which He intercedes. He is the Head of the body (Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:15–16; Colossians 1:18): the church is not a voluntary human association that has chosen Christ as its leader; it is the body of the one who is its Head, drawing its life, its direction, its unity, and its

purpose from the one who sustains and governs it by His Spirit. Every dimension of the church's existence — its worship, its mission, its discipline, its mutual love — is the expression of the body's union with and submission to the Head who is its Lord.

He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4: 'And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory', NASB 1995): the pastoral ministry of every human shepherd (elder, pastor, teacher) in the church is a derivative, delegated, accountable participation in the pastoral ministry of the one who is the Shepherd of the sheep in the most primary and the most personal sense. The Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), who knows His sheep by name (John 10:3), who seeks the lost sheep (Luke 15:4–6), and who will not lose a single one of those the Father gave Him (John 6:39) is the Chief Shepherd before whom every under-shepherd will give account at the return.

He is the Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20: 'having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone', NASB 1995; 1 Peter 2:6–7: the stone which the builders rejected has become the very corner stone): the entire edifice of the church — its doctrine, its community, its witness to the world — is built upon and organized around the specific, historically particular Person of Jesus Christ. Remove the Cornerstone and the entire building collapses; honor the Cornerstone and the entire building has the structural integrity that comes from being properly grounded on the one who does not shift, does not move, and is the same yesterday and today and forever.

## IV. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

---

*Every Page Bears Witness — To Live Is Christ*

### A. The Supremacy of Christ in Scripture

The first lesson of this series established that Scripture finds its coherence and its ultimate subject in Jesus Christ: 'These are the Scriptures that testify about Me' (John 5:39, NASB 1995). This conviction has governed every exegetical and interpretive move throughout the thirty-two lessons of the series: the Christophanies and the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (Lesson 5) pointing forward to the incarnate Son; the Psalms of David anticipating the crucifixion and the session (Lessons 23 and 28); the Levitical priesthood typifying the perfect priesthood of the one who offered Himself once for all (Lesson 18); the Davidic covenant finding its eschatological fulfillment in the one who reigns at the right hand of the Father (Lessons 19 and 28). Every page of Scripture is, in its deepest dimension, a witness to Christ — not because every verse contains a direct messianic prediction but because the

entire canon of Scripture is moving toward, flowing from, or finding its coherence in the Person and Work of the one in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

The supremacy of Christ in Scripture means that the study of Scripture is, at its deepest level, the study of Christ. Theology done rightly is Christology. Biblical theology is the unfolding of the Christ-centered narrative that encompasses both Testaments. Systematic theology is the organization of the Christ-centered truth that Scripture reveals into a coherent account of who God is and what He has done. Hermeneutics is the discipline of reading every text in light of its christological significance — not by forcing artificial allegory onto every passage but by reading every passage in the canonical context in which Christ is the organizing center. The theologian who has sat with the thirty-two lessons of this series will read Scripture differently from the one who has not — with a more comprehensive account of the one to whom the entire canon bears witness.

## **B. The Supremacy of Christ in the Believer's Life**

Philippians 1:21 provides the most compressed and the most personally searching statement of the supremacy of Christ in the believer's individual existence: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (NASB 1995). The declaration is not merely a theological conviction held at the level of intellectual assent; it is the governing reality of the entire personal existence of the one who says it. To live is Christ: the life I live, every day, in every circumstance, in every relationship, in every decision, is lived in and through and for the one who is my life. To die is gain: death is not the end of the life that is Christ but its fullest possible expression — the departure from the partial, mediated, faith-based knowledge of Christ that characterizes the present age and the arrival at the direct, immediate, face-to-face knowledge of Christ that is the beatific vision of the new creation.

Philippians 1:21 gathers up the entire series into a single sentence. The one who lived and died and rose and ascended and intercedes and will return — the one whose eternal Sonship (Lessons 3–4), whose incarnation (Lessons 6–9), whose sinless life (Lessons 14–15), whose atoning work (Lessons 20–24), whose resurrection (Lessons 25–27), whose ascension and session (Lesson 28), whose intercession (Lesson 29), and whose return (Lessons 30–31) this series has examined with sustained attention — this one is the believer's life. Not the source of life only, or the ground of life, or the enabler of life, but life itself: 'to live is Christ.' The supremacy of Christ in the believer's life is not a pious aspiration but a theological description of what it means to be in Christ, united to Him by the Spirit through faith, dead to sin and alive to God in Him.

## **V. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN ETERNITY: THE LAMB UPON THE THRONE**

---

*Every Creature in Heaven and on Earth — The Eternal Doxology of the New Creation*

## A. Philippians 2:9–11: Every Knee, Every Tongue

The supremacy of Christ in eternity receives its most comprehensive expression in the twin doxologies of Philippians 2:9–11 and Revelation 5:9–14. Philippians 2:9–11 declares the universal scope of the eternal supremacy: “Therefore God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (NASB 1995). The scope of the bowing is universal and without exception: in heaven (the angels and the saints), on earth (every living creature in the present creation), and under the earth (even those who have rejected Him, who will bow not in worship but in unwilling acknowledgment of the universal lordship they denied). The confession is not coerced assent but the ultimate acknowledgment of the reality that every creature has always faced: Jesus Christ is Lord.

The eternal supremacy declared in Philippians 2:9–11 is the eschatological completion of the present reign established in Lesson 19. Christ is already Lord of all things; the present age is the age of the invisible, Spirit-and-Word proclamation of that lordship; the return and the consummation will make the lordship visible, universal, and undeniable. Every knee that does not voluntarily bow now will bow then; every tongue that does not voluntarily confess now will confess then. The universal lordship of Christ is not in question; it is the most basic fact about the universe, hidden in the present age behind the veils of creaturely freedom and divine patience, to be fully revealed in the consummation.

## B. Revelation 5:9–14: Worthy Is the Lamb

Revelation 5:9–14 provides the most comprehensive and the most personally moving account of the eternal supremacy in all of Scripture. The scene is the heavenly throne room; the book sealed with seven seals (the scroll of the divine purposes for history) cannot be opened by any creature in heaven or on earth or under the earth; and the apostle weeps greatly because no one is found worthy to open it. Then one of the elders speaks: ‘Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.’ And John turns, and the Lion is a Lamb, standing as if slain — the Lamb who was slain, who is worthy, who takes the book, and who receives the worship of the whole of creation.

The new song of Revelation 5:9–10 declares the ground of His worthiness: “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (NASB 1995). The worthiness of the Lamb is grounded in the cross: He is worthy to open the scroll of all history because He is the one who bore the penalty for the sins of those for whom history was created. And the worship that follows encompasses every dimension of the created order: the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, the myriads of angels, and finally every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, all giving

to the Lamb the sevenfold doxology: ‘power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing’ (v. 12). The worship of the Lamb is the eternal vocation of every creature that has been purchased by His blood and re-created for His glory.

## VI. CLOSING MEDITATION: THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER

---

*Hebrews 13:8 — The Immutability of the One at the Center of All Doctrine*

This series on Christology has covered an immense amount of theological terrain: from the eternal generation of the Son and the Trinitarian relations of the Godhead (Lessons 3–4) through the Christophanies and messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (Lesson 5), the miracle of the incarnation and the mystery of the hypostatic union (Lessons 6–13), the sinless life and the active obedience (Lessons 14–15), the comprehensive ministry of the threefold office (Lessons 16–19), the atoning work in all its depths (Lessons 20–24), the bodily resurrection and its significance and the union with the risen Christ (Lessons 25–27), the ascension and the session and the intercession (Lessons 28–29), the promised return and the cosmic consummation (Lessons 30–31), and now the concluding doxological meditation on the supremacy of Christ in all things. The series has ranged from the depths of the divine eternal life to the heights of the eschatological new creation, from the microscopic detail of the Greek lexicon to the cosmic sweep of the divine redemptive purpose.

At the center of everything this series has examined — at the center of every doctrine, every text, every argument, every doxological eruption — there stands one Person, unchanging and unchanged, the same in every lesson as in every other, the same in the Trinitarian relations of the eternal past as in the new creation of the eternal future: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Hebrews 13:8, NASB 1995). The immutability of Christ is the theological ground on which every benefit this series has established rests. The atoning sacrifice He offered is permanently sufficient because He who offered it is unchanging; the intercession He makes is perpetually effective because He who makes it lives forever without change; the promise of the return is absolutely certain because He who made it is the same yesterday and today and forever; the new creation He is making is eternally secure because He who is making it cannot change His purpose or His love.

The immutability of Christ is not a cold philosophical attribute but the most personally consoling reality in the universe for those who have come to know Him. The Christ who loved the disciples with an everlasting love (John 13:1: ‘having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end’) is the Christ who loves those who are His own today to the same end, with the same love, with the same self-giving completeness. The Christ who said ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you’ (Hebrews 13:5) meant it with the full weight of His eternal immutability behind the

promise: He cannot change; He cannot unsay what He has said; He cannot unbe what He is. The same Christ who was yesterday the ground of every lesson in this series is today the ground of every act of the Christian life — and will be forever the center of the eternal new creation in which every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Christology does not terminate in information. It does not terminate even in the deepest and most carefully argued theological system. It terminates in adoration — in the prostrated, humbled, joyful, overflowing worship of those who have seen more of who Christ is and what He has done, and who find that the more they see, the more they want to worship. The thirty-two lessons of this series have been, from the very beginning, in the service of worship. Every argument was for the sake of adoration; every exegetical observation was for the sake of a deeper encounter with the one the text reveals; every doctrinal definition was for the sake of a more accurate and a more profound love for the one the definition describes. This is what Christology is for: not to fill the mind with theological information but to fill the heart with a love for Jesus Christ that is proportional to the infinite weight of who He is and what He has done.

And so we close — not with a summary, not with a review, not with a final examination but with the only word that is adequate to the Person who has been the subject of every lesson from the first to the last: ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing’ (Revelation 5:12, NASB 1995). This is where Christology leads. This is where it is meant to lead. The study of Christ that does not terminate in the worship of Christ has not yet arrived at its proper destination. May every student of these thirty-two lessons have arrived, breathless and humbled and enlarged in love, at the foot of the throne where the Lamb receives the worship of every creature — and may the worship of each one be deepened and enriched and sustained by the knowledge of the one they worship. He is worthy. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. And to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Key Texts:** *Colossians 1:15–20; John 5:39; Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:20; 1 Peter 5:4; John 10:11; Philippians 1:21; 2:9–11; Revelation 5:9–14; Hebrews 13:8; Hebrews 13:5*

## THEOLOGICAL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
<b>Supremacy of Christ</b>	The theological affirmation of Christ’s absolute, universal, and eternal primacy in every domain of reality — creation, redemption, the church, Scripture, the believer’s life, and eternity. Grounded in Colossians 1:15–18 (“so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything”) and expressed in six domains in this concluding lesson. The supremacy is not competitive (as if

Term	Definition
	<p>Christ must overcome rivals for the first place) but constitutive (He is the organizing center of all reality — all things were created through Him and for Him, all things are reconciled through Him, all things will be summed up in Him). The Christology series has been, in its entirety, the sustained examination of this constitutive supremacy across the full arc of the Person and Work of Christ.</p>
<p><b>Eis Auton: For Him (Colossians 1:16)</b></p>	<p>Greek: ‘for Him,’ ‘toward Him,’ ‘with reference to Him as goal.’ The most cosmologically significant prepositional phrase in Scripture: ‘all things have been created through Him and for Him’ (Colossians 1:16). The creation exists for Christ as its telos — its ultimate goal, its organizing purpose, its final reference point. Not merely that Christ is the efficient cause of creation (through Him) but that He is the final cause (for Him): everything that has ever existed, every human being, every act of beauty and justice and love, every dimension of the created order is oriented toward Christ as its ultimate destination and justification. The supremacy of Christ in creation is therefore not an optional theological addendum but the most basic truth about the universe and everything in it.</p>
<p><b>Image of the Invisible God</b></p>	<p>The description of Christ in Colossians 1:15 (‘He is the image of the invisible God’) and 2 Corinthians 4:4 (‘Christ, who is the image of God’). The Greek eikōn (image) in this context does not mean ‘copy’ or ‘representation’ in a diminished sense but ‘exact manifestation,’ ‘visible expression of the invisible reality.’ Christ is the image of the invisible God in the sense that He is the one in whom the invisible God becomes visible: ‘He who has seen Me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9). The title encompasses both the eternal dimension (the Son is the eternal image of the Father within the Trinitarian life) and the incarnate dimension (the Word became flesh and we beheld His glory). All theological knowledge of God is mediated through the one who is the image of the invisible God.</p>
<p><b>To Live Is Christ (Philippians 1:21)</b></p>	<p>Paul’s most compressed and most personally searching statement of the supremacy of Christ in the believer’s individual existence: ‘For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain’ (Philippians 1:21). Not Christ is the source or the ground or the enabler of life, but Christ is life itself: the entire personal existence of the believer — every day, every relationship, every decision, every act of obedience and every act of worship — is lived in and through and for the one who is the believer’s life. The corresponding ‘to die is gain’ establishes that death is not the end of the life that is Christ but its fullest expression: the departure from the partial, mediated, faith-based knowing of the present age and the arrival at the direct, face-to-face knowing of the new creation. This verse gathers up the entire Christology series into a single sentence.</p>

Term	Definition
<p><b>The Lion and the Lamb (Revelation 5)</b></p>	<p>The juxtaposition in Revelation 5:5–6 of the Lion of the tribe of Judah (the royal, conquering messianic title from Genesis 49:9 and Isaiah 11:1) and the Lamb standing as if slain (the sacrificial, crucifixion-marked title). John turns to see the Lion and sees a Lamb: the conquering victor is the crucified Redeemer; the power of the lion is the power of self-giving love expressed at the cross. The Lion-and-Lamb juxtaposition is the most theologically compressed account of the supremacy of Christ in eternity: He is worthy to open the scroll of all history because He is simultaneously the all-conquering King and the all-redeeming Lamb. The wounds of the Lamb are permanently visible (<i>hōs esphagmenon</i>) — the cross is eternally at the center of the new creation’s worship.</p>
<p><b>Hebrews 13:8: Immutability of Christ</b></p>	<p>The closing meditation of this series: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’ The immutability of Christ is not merely a static philosophical attribute but the most personally consoling reality in the universe for those who trust in Him. The ‘yesterday’ encompasses the eternal pre-existence and the entire historical ministry of the incarnate Son. The ‘today’ encompasses the present session, the perpetual intercession, and the ongoing mission of the Spirit. The ‘forever’ encompasses the return and the eternal new creation. The same Christ is the same in each: the love He expressed at the cross is the love He expresses in the present intercession; the promise He made in the first advent He will fulfill in the second; the one who has been the subject of thirty-two lessons is the same one who will be the center of the eternal worship of the new creation.</p>
<p><b>Christology as Doxology</b></p>	<p>The conviction that the ultimate proper terminus of the study of Christ is not a well-organized filing cabinet of Christological propositions but the adoring, joyful, prostrated worship of the one whom the study has revealed. Theology that terminates in information without adoration has not completed its proper work; Christology that produces only intellectual satisfaction without the fire of love for the Person studied has not arrived at its destination. The thirty-two lessons of this series have been, from the beginning, in the service of worship — every argument, every exegetical observation, every doctrinal definition oriented toward a deeper encounter with the one the texts reveal and a more informed, more passionate, more persevering love for the one the doctrines describe. ‘Worthy is the Lamb’ is the destination toward which every lesson has been pointing.</p>
<p><b>Chief Shepherd (Archipoimenos)</b></p>	<p>Greek: ‘chief shepherd,’ ‘arch-shepherd’ (<i>archipoimenos</i>). Used uniquely in 1 Peter 5:4 for Christ: ‘And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.’ The title establishes the derivative, delegated, accountable character of all human pastoral ministry: every elder and pastor is an under-shepherd whose ministry participates in and is accountable to the ministry of the one who is the Shepherd of the sheep in the most primary sense. The return of the Chief Shepherd is simultaneously the completion of His pastoral ministry (the sheep are received into the new creation) and the</p>

Term	Definition
	evaluation of every under-shepherd’s faithfulness (the unfading crown of glory for those who have shepherded faithfully; the implied accountability for those who have not).
<b>Every Knee Shall Bow (Philippians 2:10)</b>	The eschatological fulfillment of the universal lordship in Philippians 2:9–11: ‘at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.’ The scope is without exception: in heaven (angels and saints), on earth (every living creature), under the earth (even those who rejected Him, who will bow not in worship but in unwilling acknowledgment). The confession is the ultimate acknowledgment of the reality that every creature has always faced: the universal lordship of Christ is not in question but is veiled in the present age by creaturely freedom and divine patience, to be fully revealed in the consummation. The voluntary confession of the present age (the believer’s living worship) anticipates and participates in the universal confession of the eschatological age.
<b>Cornerstone (Akrogoniaios)</b>	Greek: ‘cornerstone,’ ‘capstone’ (akrogōniaios). Applied to Christ in Ephesians 2:20 (‘Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone’) and 1 Peter 2:6–7 (citing Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22). The cornerstone is the foundational stone on which the entire edifice is built and around which every other stone is aligned — the structural necessity on which everything else depends. The application of this title to Christ establishes the supremacy of Christ in the church: the entire edifice of the church — its doctrine, its community, its witness — is built upon and organized around the specific, historically particular Person of Jesus Christ. Remove the Cornerstone and the building collapses; honor the Cornerstone and the building has the structural integrity that comes from being properly grounded on the immutable one.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

### A. For the Mind: What Must We Believe?

We must believe, having completed this series, that the supremacy of Christ is not a narrowly religious claim confined to the sphere of personal devotion or ecclesial life but the most basic metaphysical claim about the structure of reality. All things were created through Him and for Him; in Him all things hold together; through Him all things are reconciled. These are not pious sentiments; they are the most comprehensive possible account of the universe and every human life within it. The congregation that understands the supremacy of Christ in creation will engage with every dimension of human experience — work, art, justice, family, politics, culture — as dimensions of the created order that belongs to Christ and that is moving toward the eschatological

consummation in which He receives all things under His headship. There is no neutral territory; every inch of creation belongs to the one for whom it was made.

We must also believe that Christology is not a department of theology alongside other departments but the organizing center of all theological knowledge. The God we study in Theology Proper is the God who is known through the Son who is His image. The doctrine of Scripture is the doctrine of the book that bears witness to Christ on every page. The soteriology we preach is the salvation that is in Christ alone, through His atoning work, applied by the Spirit who was sent by the ascended Son. The ecclesiology we practice is the theology of the body of the one whose head is Christ. Eschatology is the theology of the return of the one who is already reigning. Every theological locus is a christological locus; and the pastor or teacher who understands this will preach every doctrine with the christological depth and the doxological fire that the subject demands.

## **B. For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?**

Let the completion of this series be not the occasion for satisfaction at a theological task accomplished but the beginning of a deeper desire — the desire that Philippians 3:10 describes: ‘that I may know Him.’ The series has provided thirty-two lessons of sustained theological engagement with the Person and Work of Christ. But the greatest Christologist in the history of the church — the apostle who wrote more about Christ than any other human being, who had been caught up to the third heaven, who had received extraordinary direct revelations of the divine purpose — prays Philippians 3:10 as a desire still unfulfilled, a goal still being pursued, a reality that is always more than what has been experienced. Let the completion of this series produce not satisfaction but an enlarged desire for the deeper knowing of the one about whom these lessons have spoken.

Desire a congregation that has been formed by this series into a more Christ-centered community in every dimension of its life — in its worship, which is directed toward the one whose supremacy every lesson has established; in its mission, which is the proclamation of the one for whom all things were created; in its mutual love, which flows from the love that was demonstrated at the cross and that shapes the body whose Head is Christ; and in its hope, which is fixed on the return of the one who will make all things new. The measure of the series’ success is not the quantity of Christological information retained but the quality of the love for Christ that has been deepened, enlarged, and rendered more informed and more passionate by the encounter with the one to whom every lesson has borne witness.

## **C. For the Hands: What Must We Do?**

- Preach the Colossian hymn (Colossians 1:15–20) as the most comprehensive Christological text in Scripture — the text that gathers up the entire arc of the Person and Work of Christ from the creation to the new creation into a single sustained doxological declaration of the supremacy of the one who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the body, the firstborn from the dead, and the one through whom all things are

reconciled. The congregation that has sat with this hymn at the depth this series has provided will hear it differently than the congregation encountering it for the first time; and the sermon that draws on the full depth of the series will preach it with the comprehensive christological richness it deserves.

- Teach Philippians 1:21 ('to live is Christ and to die is gain') as the most personally searching christological statement in the Pauline corpus — the one that presses the theology of the entire series into the most intimate personal question: Is Christ my life? Not merely my Savior, not merely my Lord in some formal sense, but the governing reality of every dimension of my personal existence? A sustained congregational engagement with this verse — perhaps as the basis for a personal devotional series following the conclusion of the formal curriculum — would give every individual student of the series the most direct possible application of its theological content to the question of personal spiritual formation.
- Read and preach Revelation 5:1–14 as the concluding doxological vision of the series — the heavenly scene in which the Lion who is a Lamb receives the worship of all creation for the blood that purchased them. The sermon's pastoral aim: the congregation should emerge knowing that this is not merely a future hope but the present reality of the heavenly realm into which they are drawn every time they worship the living Christ. The sevenfold doxology of Revelation 5:12 — power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, blessing — is the congregation's own doxology, formed and deepened by thirty-two lessons of Christological study and ready to be offered to the one who is worthy to receive it.
- Use this series as the foundation for a sustained ongoing commitment to Christ-centered preaching and teaching. The thirty-two lessons of this Christology series are not the completion of a curriculum but the beginning of a lifelong pattern: the pattern of beginning every sermon, every lesson, every pastoral conversation with the question, 'How does this text, this doctrine, this pastoral situation direct us to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ?' The pastor who has been formed by this series will preach every text with a more instinctive, more comprehensive, and more personally passionate christological depth than the pastor who has not.
- Celebrate the completion of the series as a community with a worship service structured around the theological themes that have shaped it: the pre-existence of the Son, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, the intercession, the return, and the new creation. Let each dimension of the Christological narrative receive its appropriate doxological expression — in Scripture reading, in song, in prayer, in the Lord's Supper — as the community receives, with full theological depth and full devotional warmth, the one whose Person and Work they have studied for thirty-two lessons. The celebration is not the celebration of the series; it is the celebration of the one who is the series' subject, its center, and its eternal destination.

## STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

### OPENING QUESTION

1. As you arrive at the final lesson of the Christology series, what is the single most significant truth about Jesus Christ that this series has established, deepened, or transformed in your understanding? Not a summary of everything learned, but one truth — one encounter with a text, one doctrinal claim, one exegetical insight — that has most permanently reshaped the way you understand, preach, and love the Person and Work of Christ. Share honestly with the group what this series has done in you, and what you most want to carry from it into your ongoing ministry.

### OBSERVATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DO THE TEXTS SAY?)

2. Read Colossians 1:15–20 in its entirety, attending to its structure as a hymn or poem with two movements: vv. 15–17 (the supremacy of Christ in creation) and vv. 18–20 (the supremacy of Christ in redemption). Identify: (a) all the titles and descriptions given to Christ in verses 15–17 and what each establishes about His relationship to the created order; (b) the parallel structure between the two movements ('He is the firstborn of all creation', v. 15 / 'He is the firstborn from the dead', v. 18); (c) the purpose clause of verse 18 ('so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything' — the purpose of both His creational primacy and His redemptive work).

3. Read Philippians 2:5–11 and Philippians 1:21. In 2:5–11, identify the movement from the self-emptying humility (vv. 6–8) to the divine exaltation (vv. 9–11), and explain the theological relationship between the two movements ('therefore' in v. 9 — the exaltation is the Father's response to the Son's obedience). What is the scope of the bowing described in verse 10, and what does the inclusion of 'under the earth' establish about the universality of the confession? In 1:21, identify what 'to live is Christ' and 'to die is gain' each declare about the supremacy of Christ in the believer's existence.

4. Read Revelation 5:1–14. Identify: (a) the problem stated in verses 1–4 (the sealed book and the absence of a worthy one); (b) the announcement of verses 5–6 (Lion and Lamb — how does John see the Lion when he looks?); (c) the content of the new song in verses 9–10 (the ground of the Lamb's worthiness); (d) the expanding scope of the worship in verses 11–14 (from the four living creatures and elders, to the myriads of angels, to every creature in every domain). What is the sevenfold list of Revelation 5:12, and what does the sevenfold character of the doxology establish about the comprehensiveness of the Lamb's worthiness?

5. Read Hebrews 13:7–8. In what context does the declaration 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever' appear (what has the author just said in verse 7, and how does the immutability of Christ in verse 8 provide the theological ground for the instruction)? What does the

‘yesterday’ (the historical ministry of the incarnate Christ), the ‘today’ (the present session and intercession of the exalted Christ), and the ‘forever’ (the eternal new creation of the returning Christ) encompass, and how does the immutability across these three dimensions provide the pastoral consolation the author intends?

### INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

- 6.** The lesson argues that the phrase ‘for Him’ (eis auton) in Colossians 1:16 is ‘the most cosmologically significant prepositional phrase in Scripture’ — establishing not merely that Christ is the efficient cause of creation (through Him) but its final cause (for Him). What are the pastoral and missional implications of the conviction that all things were created for Christ? How does this conviction shape: (a) the believer’s relationship to the material world (neither worshipping it nor despising it, but seeing it as belonging to Christ); (b) the scope of the gospel’s claim on every dimension of human life; (c) the motivation for the pursuit of justice, beauty, and cultural engagement?
- 7.** The lesson claims that ‘to live is Christ’ (Philippians 1:21) is not merely a pious aspiration but a theological description of what it means to be in Christ, united to Him by the Spirit through faith, dead to sin and alive to God. What is the difference between ‘to live is Christ’ as a theological reality (something that is objectively true of every genuine believer) and as an experiential aspiration (something that the believer progressively inhabits more fully through the deepening of the union)? How does the doctrine of union with Christ (Lesson 27) illuminate the relationship between the objective reality and the subjective experience of this verse?
- 8.** The lesson presents the juxtaposition of the Lion and the Lamb in Revelation 5:5–6 as the most theologically compressed account of the eternal supremacy: ‘the conquering victor is the crucified Redeemer; the power of the lion is the power of self-giving love expressed at the cross.’ How does this juxtaposition challenge contemporary cultural assumptions about the nature of power and the nature of love? What does the Lamb’s wounds being permanently visible in the new creation establish about the character of the eternal glory of Christ and about the eternal significance of the cross?
- 9.** The lesson closes with the declaration that ‘Christology terminates in adoration’ — that the study of Christ that does not produce worship has not arrived at its proper destination. How do you assess the relationship between the intellectual rigor of theological study and the doxological fire it is meant to produce? Can they be in tension? How have you personally experienced (or failed to experience) the movement from theological study to doxological adoration in the course of this series? What specific practices, disciplines, or pastoral postures most reliably facilitate that movement?
- 10.** Looking back over the entire thirty-two lessons of the Christology series, what is the most significant dimension of the Person and Work of Christ that this series has revealed as

underemphasized or underdeveloped in your preaching and teaching prior to the series? And what specific change — in preaching practice, in pastoral care, in personal devotion, in congregational formation — will you make as a result of what this series has established about the supremacy of Christ in all things?

### **APPLICATION QUESTIONS (WHAT DOES IT DEMAND OF US?)**

**11.** The lesson recommends celebrating the completion of the series as a community with a worship service structured around the theological themes that have shaped it. Design the outline of such a service: what Scripture passages would be read, what theological themes would be named and celebrated, what songs would be sung, how would the Lord's Supper be incorporated, and what would the pastoral aim of the service be? Specifically: how would you ensure that the celebration is the celebration of the Person of Christ rather than the celebration of the completion of a curriculum?

**12.** The lesson recommends teaching Philippians 1:21 ('to live is Christ') as the most personally searching christological application of the series. Design a brief personal devotional practice — for yourself and then for your congregation — that would help individual believers engage with the question 'Is Christ my life?' in the most honest and the most personally transforming way. What specific practices, what specific examinations of conscience, what specific acts of surrender would most help a person move from holding 'to live is Christ' as a doctrinal proposition toward inhabiting it as the governing reality of every dimension of their personal existence?

**13.** The lesson recommends using this series as the foundation for a sustained ongoing commitment to Christ-centered preaching and teaching. Looking back at the sermons you have preached and the teaching you have offered in the past year: to what degree has the christological center been consistently and explicitly present? Identify one specific sermon or teaching from the past year that would have been significantly enriched by the christological depth established in this series, and explain how the specific christological content of the relevant lesson would have changed the sermon or the teaching.

**14.** This is the final question of the final lesson of the Christology series. The study is complete — thirty-two lessons, eleven units, the full arc of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ from the eternal pre-existence of the Son to the face of God seen in the new creation. What do you most want to say to Christ right now? Not a theological summary, not a doctrinal conclusion, not a pastoral application — but a word from the student of these lessons to the one who has been their subject, their center, and their destination. Take a moment in silence. And then, if you are willing, speak it. 'To live is Christ.' 'Worthy is the Lamb.' 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.'

## PRAYER FOCUS

---

Open this final lesson's prayer time with a reading of Revelation 5:1–14 in its entirety — the heavenly vision of the Lamb who was slain and who is worthy to receive all honor and glory and blessing. Read it as the liturgy of the eternal new creation already being practiced in the heavenly realm, into which every act of faithful Christian worship is a participation. Let the expanding scope of the doxology wash over the group in its progressive grandeur: first the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders with their golden bowls full of incense ('which are the prayers of the saints' — the prayers of this very group are in those bowls); then the myriads of angels surrounding the throne; then every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea — the whole cosmos in its doxological fullness, directed toward the Lamb who was slain.

Spend extended time in the sevenfold doxology of Revelation 5:12, addressed to the one who is the subject of thirty-two lessons of sustained theological study: 'Power' — adore the Lamb as the one who holds all authority in heaven and on earth and who exercises it for the sake of His body; 'Riches' — adore Him as the inexhaustible source of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus; 'Wisdom' — adore Him as the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the one whose ways are higher than our ways and whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts; 'Might' — adore Him as the one who conquered death and who will abolish the last enemy; 'Honor' — adore Him as the one to whom the first place in everything belongs by right of both creation and redemption; 'Glory' — adore Him as the unveiled image of the invisible God, the radiance of the Father's glory, the one whose face will fill the new creation with eternal light; and 'Blessing' — adore Him as the one from whom every blessing in the heavenly places flows to those who are in Him. Let each attribute receive its full doxological attention before the group moves to the next.

Pray with thanksgiving for the thirty-two lessons of this series and for everything that God has done through them in the community that has studied them together. Give thanks for every specific insight, every doctrinal clarification, every encounter with a text that revealed more of Christ than was previously seen. Give thanks for the teachers and preachers and theologians of the historic church who have gone before and whose work has made this series possible. Give thanks for the congregation in which this series will be preached and taught, and ask for the Spirit's work to root the christological depth of the series permanently in the life, the worship, the mission, and the love of the community that has received it.

Close with the three christological affirmations that together constitute the series' final word, spoken together as the corporate confession of those who have arrived at the destination toward which every lesson has been pointing:

*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”*

| *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

| *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

REVELATION 5:12; PHILIPPIANS 1:21; HEBREWS 13:8, NASB 1995

---

## *Soli Deo Gloria*

*To God Alone Be the Glory*

---

## FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

*Systematic Theology Series — Christology*

32 Lessons Across 11 Units

*“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants on account of Jesus.”*

**2 Corinthians 4:5, NASB 1995**

**Dr. Joshua Nichols**

[josh@faithfultotheword.com](mailto:josh@faithfultotheword.com) | [faithfultotheword.com](http://faithfultotheword.com)