Introduction to Christology

- Definitions of terms
- Types of Christology
- Importance of Christology

Definitions

- What is Christology?
  - Started with “Who do you say that I am?”
  - Study of Christ.
  - Often: discussion of Jesus as Messiah (narrow)
    or discussion of Jesus as more than human
    (broader) (B. Witherington).
  - Person of Christ vs. work of Christ.
  - It “involves an assessment of the person, works,
    experiences, relationships, roles, and career of
    Jesus” (B. Witherington).

- What is Christology?
  - “Any evaluation of Jesus in respect to who he
    was and the role he played in the divine plan” (R.
    Brown).
  - Systematic theology: person and work of Christ.
  - Overlaps with soteriology.
    - Work of Christ or appropriation of salvation.
    - Arbitrary division.
Definitions

• We must define four pairs of terms:
  – Christology from above/from below: starts with preexistent Logos; starts with Jesus’ human life.
    • Major methodological question.
    • Theological vs. historical starting point.
    • Alexandrian vs. Antiochene.
    • Christology vs. “Jesusology.”
  – High/low Christology: affirms Christ’s divinity; emphasizes his humanity but not his divinity.

• Explicit/implicit Christology: based on direct statements; based on inferences.

• Ontological/functional Christology: focuses on who/what Jesus is in himself; focuses on Jesus’ work for us in salvation.

Types of Christology

• Kärkkäinen: 4 types of Christology:
  – Incarnational Christology: Eternal Logos takes human form in Jesus.
  – Theology of the cross: Jesus’ death is our justification and the revelation of God.
  – Resurrection/ascension Christology: Jesus’ resurrection defeats death and Satan and is the source of life for those in union with him.
  – Empowerment Christology: Jesus is the one who does miracles, heals, baptizes with the Spirit.
Types of Christology

Why is Christology important?