

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Dr. Stephen Myers and Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 4:
CHRISTOLOGY

Lecture 5:
THE STATES OF CHRIST



The John Knox Institute
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Rev. Robert D. McCurley is minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church, in Taylors, South Carolina, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

greenvillepresbyterian.com

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Module 4

Christology

Lectures by Dr. Stephen Myers:

1. Introduction to Christology
2. The Divinity of Christ
3. The Humanity of Christ

Lectures by Robert D. McCurley, ThM:

4. The Hypostatic Union
- 5. The States of Christ**
6. The Offices of Christ
7. The Necessity of the Atonement
8. The Nature of the Atonement
9. The Extent of the Atonement
10. The Preeminence of Christ

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The States of Christ

Introduction

Children learn from human experience about gravity long before their teachers teach them the technical definition of the law of gravity in science class. Children throw a ball, or a stick, or a toy up into the air, and every time, it comes back down to the ground. Quickly they conclude that what goes up must come down. Now later on, in school, they learn why this happens, as well as the exceptions to this rule.

This provides an illustration by way of contrast, not in terms of scientific laws, but rather, spiritual and eternal realities. In the incarnation, the one who came down, later went up. He who descended, afterward, ascended. As Ephesians 4, verse 10 says, *“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”* This describes the two states of the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ—his state of humiliation, and his state of exaltation.

Theme: *Christ’s states of humiliation and exaltation.*

I. Scriptural Basis

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:6–11)

1. The one who is being described:
 - a. One who himself is the eternal God;
 - b. One equal with God;
 - c. The second Person of the Trinity.

2. His descent.
 - a. The humiliation of the incarnate Word.
3. His ascent.
 - b. The exaltation of Christ.

Questions:

1. Who is the one that is being described in Philippians 2:6–11? How is that evident from Scripture?

2. How does this passage in Philippians 2:6–11 teach us about the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ?

II. Doctrinal Overview

1. The states of Christ—the two conditions into which the Son of God entered:
 - a. The state of humiliation, and the state of exaltation.
2. The humiliation of Christ.

As summarized in *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, question #46:

“The estate of Christ’s humiliation was that low condition, wherein he for our sakes, emptied himself of his glory, took upon him the form of a servant, in his conception and birth, life, death, and after his death until his resurrection.”

- a. His birth—Luke 2:7; Micah 5:2; John 1:46.
- b. His life—Matthew 8:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:10; Isaiah 53:3.
 - 1) He was made under the law; he subjected himself to the law of God,.
 - 2) He was obliged to obey all the precepts, he was subject to the curse of the law broken by his people.

3) He lived in poverty, under threat and danger.

4) He endured manifold temptations, yet without sin.

c. His death—Isaiah 53:9; Psalm 22:6–7.

1) He suffered the terrors of death, the power of darkness, and the weight of God’s wrath.

2) He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot.

3) He was openly denied by Peter.

4) He was forsaken by his disciples.

d. His burial—Isaiah 53:9.

3. The exaltation of Christ.

As summarized in *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, question #51:

“The estate of Christ’s exaltation comprehendeth his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and his coming again to judge the world.”

a. His resurrection—Psalm 16:10–11; 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

1) His body did not undergo corruption.

b. His ascension—Colossians 3:1.

c. His session—now sitting at the right hand of God as the God-man.

d. His triumphant return in judgment at the last day.

Questions:

1. How do we see evidence of Christ’s humiliation in the accounts of his birth?

2. What does the *Larger Catechism* mean where it states: “He subjected himself to the law of God”? How then should we understand Galatians 3:13?

3. What other aspects in Jesus' earthly life evidence his humiliation?

4. At the time of his death, what experience did the Lord Jesus receive from the world, and what experience from God the Father? Explain how he laid down his life as an offering for sin.

5. How do the Gospels speak about Jesus burial? How long was he under the power of death?

6. How do we know that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the center of history? What does the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ magnify? What are the benefits of Christ's resurrection to his believers?

7. What implications does Jesus' ascension have for his people?

8. What is the “session” of the Lord Jesus Christ? What are the works of Christ in this state?

9. What will Jesus do on the last day of the world? How do the Scriptures describe the situation of that day?

III. Polemical Exposition

1. Beware of liberal, unbelieving theologians, who deny the supernatural aspects and miracles of redemption regarding both Christ’s humiliation and exaltation.
2. You must resist every attack on the doctrine of Christ’s bodily resurrection.

Questions:

1. Why should we be aware of liberal and unbelieving theologians? What did they mainly claim? Could you give some examples of who they were?

2. Why must the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ be defended with such great energy?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. Christ's humiliation provides the grounds for our own deliverance.
2. The pattern of Christ's humiliation governs the Christian's gospel humility in the world.
3. Christ's exaltation raises our thoughts from earth to heaven.
4. We have an unconquerable hope and comfort rooted in Christ's resurrection and ascension.

Questions:

1. Thinking about how the Lord Jesus gave of himself—according to 2 Corinthians 8:9—how should make us marvel? How does this motivate your daily Christian life in walking with God?

2. How does the humiliation of Jesus Christ serve as an example to believers regarding humility?

3. How does Christ's exaltation raise the believer's thoughts from earth to heaven? Meditate on Colossians chapter 3. How does this chapter speak to you?

4. How should the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ give comfort to the Christian and strengthen us in our service to him?

V. Self-Reflection

Did this lecture help you to behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ in his humiliation and exaltation? Do these truths make you love Christ more and want to serve him more fervently? Believers are risen together with Christ in heaven, and they are exhorted to fix their minds on things above. Do you give attention to this focus in your personal life and in your family?
