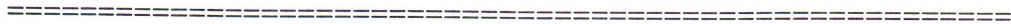


Airline, Aviation and Aerospace Christian Fellowships
The Links Hotel -- 7-11 November 1990

Conference Theme: The Mind of Christ

"I do just what the Father has taught me" (John 8:28)



The Mind of Christ: A Case Study

(Last year: "The Heart of God" -- reflect the glory of God: human wholeness)

I. Framework

- A. What is your picture of Jesus?
- B. What were the ways in which Jesus was pictured in the earliest churches?
 - The Good Shepherd
 - The Philosopher
 - Jonah delivered from the fish
 - The Fiery Furnace
 - And further...
- C. Through the the centuries (Jaroslav Pelikan)

II. The Gospels

- A. Paul and the Jesus of the Resurrection
- B. Matthew, Mark and Luke
 - 1) Kingdom of God
 - 2) Son of Man
- C. The Gospel of John

Question: What did Jesus mean by "I am"

5 Groups of Texts

1. read text
2. what is context
3. what does Jesus say
4. what tell you about the mind of Jesus (Christ)

1. Woman at the well -- John 4:1-26 (4:26)
2. Disciples fear in the boat on the sea -- John 6:16-24 (6:20)
3. Jesus able to forgive sins -- John 8:12-30 (8:24,52)
4. Jesus shares insight about his betrayal -- John 13:18-30 (13:19)
5. Jesus reply to the soldiers -- John 18:1-11 (18:5,8)

III. A Closer Look: "I am" in the Gospel of John (without predicate)

- A. "I am" in an absolute sense: John 8:58 and 13:19
- B. "I am" as part of a double meaning: John 8:24, 28
- C. Further Examples of Possible Meaning:
 - a) Jesus and the Woman of Samaria: John 4:26
 - b) Jesus on the Troubled Sea: John 6:20
 - c) Jesus arrested: John 18: 5, 6, 8

IV. Concluding Observations

- A. Jesus's Self-understanding
- B. A "present" faith in the person of Jesus the Christ
 - 4:26 -- I am (the Christ) -- too political
 - 8:28 -- I am (Son of Man) -- too future
- C. "Ego eimi" -- the Father and the Son are one (not abstract or merely intellectual)
- D. Different aspects of the relation of the Father and the Son (early Trinitarian thought)
- E. Jesus manifests and makes known the "name" of God (Ex 3:14; Isa. 40-55)

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"Jesus Through the Centuries"



- 1) **Rabbi** -- Mark 1:27; Matt. 16:13f.
- 2) **Promise/Fulfillment** -- Gal. 3:24; Heb. 6:13-20
- 3) **Light of the Gentiles** -- John 1:5, 7, 9
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- 11) **Divine/Human Model** -- Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16
- 12) **Universal Man** -- Col. 1:18; Heb. 3:3
- 13) **Mirror of the Eternal** -- John 14:9; I Cor. 13:12; Js. 1:23
- 14) **Prince of Peace** -- Isa. 9:6; Heb. 7:2
- 15) **Rational Teacher** -- John 1:6-9 (Prov. 8:22); Rom. 1: 18-32
- 16) **Poet of the Spirit** -- I Pet. 2:25; SS 2:1; Isa. 9:6; Rev. 22:16
- 17) **Liberator** -- Gal. 5:1; (John 2:13-17)
- 18) **Representative Man** -- John 8:12; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 1:5; 15:3

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Conference Theme: The Mind of Christ

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The Mind of Christ: Three Areas of Application

1) Dialogue and Dogma

2) Grace and Judgment

3) Politics

Why these three areas?

The three philosophical questions -- Being -- Epistemology --Ethics

1) Dialogue and Dogma (Matt. 16:13)

Who do men say that I am? (The question of Being)

2) Grace and Judgment (Luke 4:16-19)

How do we confess Christ in our histories? (The question of epistemology)

3) Politics (Matt. 22:15-22; Ro. 13 -- Rev. 13)

How do we live as disciples of Jesus Christ today? (The question of ethics)

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The Mind of Christ

Our Image of Jesus -- Part I.

(Last year: "The Heart of God" -- reflect the glory of God: human wholeness)

There are three questions that I would like us to address in this series on "The Mind of Christ."

The first question is "Who is Jesus Christ?" In relation to this I want us to ask ourselves whether we have an adequate understanding of who Jesus is.

The second question is "Should I live in a certain way because of who he is?" Here I want us to reflect upon three ways in which we are called to apply our understanding of his proper identity.

Third, I want us to ask, "What does he promise us?" By virtue of the relationship that can exist between Christ and ourselves we are promised certain strengths that enable us to be a blessing to those around us. We begin by asking "Who is Jesus Christ?"

I. A Framework for Thought: Images of Jesus

A. What is your picture of Jesus?

Before we can begin to talk about our theme, "The Mind of Christ" we must ask a question about how we picture Jesus. As Christians we maintain that the reports that we have about Jesus, as recorded by the writers of the Gospels and by Paul are reliable, trustworthy, and true. In fact, we believe that they are so true that we are willing to base our lives upon them.

At the same time, Christians have always held, in the main, that these reports about the person and work of Jesus are reports written by men, albeit with minds inspired, or strengthened, by the Spirit, but, nevertheless, reports reflective of different personalities and human temperaments. They are, then, reports that are nuanced by the attitudes and minds of their authors, in some ways not unlike the articles that we read in a daily newspaper or historical record. This is not to say, for example, that the way in which Matthew presents Jesus is more right or wrong than the description by Mark, etc. We simply have different perspectives that are offered up by different persons who are emphasizing different aspects of the person and work of Jesus. That these different views are not so radically different from one another implies a unitary person behind them. However, by paying attention to the different perspectives that are given we are able to appreciate different dimensions of the personality of our Lord.

Questions:

1) Take some time before you proceed any further and ask yourself what is your "picture" of Jesus? The following are some suggestive questions with which to begin.

- a) How do you view him with your mind's eye?
- b) Is he short or tall?
- c) Is Jesus an introvert or extrovert?
- d) With what kind of an accent does he speak?

2) How do the different Gospels present Jesus? It may be helpful to spend some time thinking about the picture of Jesus that is suggested by the following set of texts:

a) Matthew 1:1. (You may wish to continue on and read the genealogy of Jesus as presented by Matthew, vs. 2-17. Further on you may want to compare the genealogy given by Matthew with that found in Luke 3:23-38. In what ways are these different? What do the differences suggest about the different ways in which Matthew and Luke understood Jesus?) Add to your thoughts the further image of Jesus suggested by Matt. 2: 1-12. This is the only text that tells of the visiting magi at Jesus's birth.

b) Mark 1:9-20; 16:1-8. Consider the different way by which Mark begins the story of Jesus. Why begin with John the Baptist in the desert and then follow this with the appearance of the mature Jesus? There is no genealogy here nor any reference to the infancy of Jesus. What do you make of the surprise and alarm at his resurrection at the end of the Gospel?

c) Luke 1:1-4. After considering this opening prologue you may want to read the two hymns that are embedded in this account, that of Mary (1:46-55) and that of Zechariah (1:68-79). How do these hymns, together with the genealogy of Jesus

found in Luke (3:23-37), shape your understanding of Jesus. Note here that Luke traces Jesus's lineage from Joseph back to Adam, whereas Matthew traced that lineage back to Abraham. Do you see any significance in this difference?

d) John 1:1-18. John begins his portrayal of Jesus in a way that is remarkably different from that of the other Gospel writers. Consider this difference and the image of Jesus presented here as compared with what you have already noted above.

e) Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-11. Consider the way by which Paul came to his knowledge of Jesus (cp. Acts 9:3-30). What does Paul say about our knowledge of the Lord? How does this affect your idea of an image of Jesus?

B. What were the ways in which Jesus was pictured in the earliest churches?

As far as we can say with any degree of certainty, there is no picture of Jesus that remains from the early days of the Church. However, some of the earliest Christian artwork which does remain comes from the catacombs beneath Rome and from some mosaics scattered elsewhere in the ancient Roman Empire. Some of the ways in which Jesus is depicted include the following:

- 1) As the Good Shepherd
- 2) As a Greek Philosopher
- 3) In the symbolism understood in the depiction of Jonah being delivered from the great fish
- 4) As a dove in the midst of The Fiery Furnace

Questions: Although we have no portraiture of Jesus, the way in which he is depicted, as described above, does tell us something of his nature. How do you understand this symbolism? What does it tell us about how Jesus was perceived? Can you identify the biblical texts or stories which gave rise to these depictions of Jesus?

C. Through the Centuries

Often an age or a generation will be dominated for various cultural reasons by a particular portraiture of Jesus. One author, Jaroslav Pelikan, has written a book entitled "Jesus Through the Centuries" in which he tells the story of the history of the Church by way of the different perceptions of Jesus that have dominated various periods of history down to our own day. The following is the list he offers together with texts from the Bible that would support the particular manner by which Jesus was understood:

- 1) **Rabbi** -- Mark 1:27; Matt. 16:13f.
- 2) **Promise/Fulfillment** -- Gal. 3:24; Heb. 6:13-20
- 3) **Light of the Gentiles** -- John 1:5, 7, 9
- 4) **King of Kings** -- Rev. 1:5
- 5) **Cosmic Christ (Logos)** -- John 1:1
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- 16) **Poet of the Spirit** -- I Pet. 2:25; SS 2:1; Isa. 9:6; Rev. 22:16
- 17) **Liberator** -- Gal. 5:1; (John 2:13-17)
- 18) **Representative Man** -- John 8:12; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 1:5; 15:3

Questions: How does our age depict Jesus? How do you picture him in your mind? How does your "picture" of Jesus shape the way in which you think about the mind of Jesus?

II. Paul and The Gospels

A. Paul and the Jesus of the Resurrection

The Apostle Paul and the Gospels give us different nuances into the person of Jesus. Paul talks about the Christ of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:49; Romans 5:12-17). He describes this Christ in a way that is consonant with the Gospel writers. Jesus was born of a woman, under the Law (Galatians 4:4; Romans 9:5). He was a descendent of David (Romans 1:4). However, he usually talks about Christ rather than Jesus. Here Christ, from *christos* (meaning anointed), is more of a name than a messianic title. Using this term for Jesus draws us immediately to Paul's understanding of Jesus's divinity and pre-existent nature (I Corinthians 8:6).

Question: After having in your mind Paul's conception of Jesus, turn to II Corinthians 3:17-18 where our own transformation into Christ's image is described. How does this transformation which we can expect help you to understand Paul's conception of Jesus?

B. Matthew, Mark and Luke

Matthew, Mark, and Luke also have their distinct emphases. Again, nuanced differently, each of these Gospels draw us to Jesus's relation to the Kingdom of God (Matt. 4:23;

Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:18-19, 43) or to his identity as the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20; Mark 8:38; Luke 18:8), both terms that draw forth a certain political conception of his identity, albeit the latter in a more radical and temporally distinct way.

Questions: Consider the image of Jesus presented by the passages listed above. You may want to do some further study and find other places where Jesus identifies his person and work with the coming of the Kingdom of God (or of Heaven) as well as with the idea of the Son of Man.

As you consider the idea of the Kingdom of God, reflect back upon Israel's desire for a king and the nature of God's provision (I Samuel 12:12), the promise given to David that his kingdom would last forever (II Samuel 7), and the announcement in Isaiah 9:6-7 that a child would be born to David's line who would reign forever and be called: "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," a prophecy applied to Jesus (Luke 1:31-33).

The term "Son of Man" is found in Psalm 8:4 and appears related to God's providential care for man, made in God's image (Genesis 1: 26) to be keeper and ruler over God's creation. In Daniel 7:13 the prophet sees one referred to as "like a son of man" who appears in the heavens, coming to destroy the final beast (of four: lion, bear, leopard, and ten-horned beast) envisioned by Daniel. This son of man is given authority, glory, power, and eternal dominion over all peoples and nations. Consider Matthew's use of this term in Jesus's request that his disciples tell him their opinion of his identity (16:13) and in his juxtaposition of the idea of the "son of man" (17:12) with Isaiah's understanding of the "suffering servant" (53:3).

C. The Gospel of John -- Question: What did Jesus mean by "I am"

All of the images that we have presented above might be called "correct" or orthodox images of Jesus. Each offers us a different perspective into his person and work. When we think of the mind of Christ, each of these images tells us something different about that mind and about what Christ's will might be for us. This will be a theme that we will want to take up in further reflection.

However, before we do we need to consider the image of Jesus fostered by the Gospel of John. In particular, we will want to take up the intriguing question of what was meant by Jesus when he replied, often elliptically, to situations with which he was confronted or to questions directed to him concerning his identity, with the phrase "I am" either with or without the use of a modifying predicate.

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Talk 2 of 4

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The Mind of Christ: Our Image of Jesus **Part II**

As we take up this topic there are two points that I would like us to consider at the outset.

1. First, the image that we have of Jesus in our minds is important. This is true not only of our image of Jesus, but of any image that we might have. In many ways we become our image.

Think of the meaning of the following phrase by the poet and dramatist Oscar Wilde, "Life is the imitation of art." Often we imagine that art is an imitation, or a copy, of life. And it is. However, the opposite is also true. Think of the meaning of Wilde's phrase as you imagine in your mind a Paris fashion show and the ways we are encouraged to dress. Here our life is imitating art, someone else's idea of how we ought to dress and to be. I am sure that you can imagine numerous other examples of life imitating art. In this light you may wish to consider the implications of Paul's discussion of what we will be in his letter to the church at Corinth (II Cor. 15:48-49):

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

The point of this consideration about the nature of images and how they affect what we become is to draw us back to our discussion about developing an adequate image of Jesus in our minds before we can begin to talk about the mind of Christ. Without taking this first step it is too easy for us to read into the mind of Christ our mind and our thinking about how things are or ought to be.

Questions: Think of the ways in which you have begun to picture consciously Jesus. Can you list all of the different images that come to your mind? Now, take a Bible and read about the ways in which Jesus tells us that he is to be pictured in Matthew's account, 25:35-40.

2. Second, we might ask ourselves "why" one would wish to develop the mind of Christ? One of the other speakers in this conference gave us direction for how to think about this question and by encouraging us in the following ways. We were encouraged to do the

following three things: 1) **cooperate** with the Holy Spirit; 2) learn to hear what is being told us, i.e., develop good patterns of **communication**. Here we were encouraged to remember Solomon's request of God, that he be given a "hearing heart." 3) Finally, we have been **commissioned** by way of such cooperation and communication for witnessing and hearing (which also implies active doing) among those with whom we come into contact.

I want to use the kind of spiritual sensitivity fostered by this line of thinking to suggest the following three points which will encompass the rest of this talk. First, it is right, proper, and fitting that we be in relationship with Christ. This, of course, implies all that we have said about the importance of images and, pointedly, about our image of Jesus to this point. Second, it will be argued here that the most adequate image of who Jesus is is expressed in the Gospel of John in the several places where Jesus is represented as using the phrase "I am," either with or without a predicate, defining, or implying, the nature of his identity. Third, it is by way of the power of God, expressed through the agency of his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, which enables us to enter into the reality of God for us as individuals pictured in the nature of Jesus.

I. Our Relationship with Jesus

We might begin by asking why it is right, proper, and fitting that we be in relationship with Christ?

An immediate answer to this question is that we were made like him. Or, to put it in another way, he was made like us. At the very beginning of the biblical understanding of human personhood we are told that we are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26). If I am made in God's image it behooves me to learn something of that one in whose image I am made. In the preceding verses we are shown a God who is one who creates. However, not only does he create, he also blesses that which he creates. Furthermore, he names his creation -- and then even calls Adam and Eve to join him in that process of naming their world.

Our God, in whose image we are made, is one who creates, blesses, and names his creation. Even so we are co-creators with God. We have been given the gift of being able to bless that which we make, to say that it is good. We have even been given the ability to name the created order and all that is within it, i.e., to understand it, to analyze, discriminate, and call things by their own name.

However, there is also another side of the story. Not only do we have this ability to create, but we can also destroy. Not only can we bless, we can also curse. Not only can we name and understand things, but we can misname, misunderstand, fall into error and even consciously lie. Such has been the nature of the human condition, the author of Genesis argues, almost since the first creation of man. The author of the book of James writes: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness" (3:9). With this ability, and the Bible even argues

innate propensity, to destroy, curse, and misname, it is, as it were, the image that we were meant to be has been shattered. We might look into a mirror and, instead of seeing a perfect image of God, we see one that has been shattered much as one might a plate glass window.

It is at this point that our understanding of Jesus's nature becomes of central importance. He now is the only flawless image of God. Paul argues in this way in his second letter to the church at Corinth:

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (4:4-6).

Not only is Christ the image of God, but in his letter to the church at Colossae Paul goes on to argue for the supremacy of this one image of God. Christ, he says, is not only the image of the invisible God, he is also the firstborn of all creation. He continues in 1:15: "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth...." Furthermore, if we would be like him, like this one flawless image of the God in whose likeness we were made, then, Paul writes, we need to live like the God who made us. The rules for living that Paul lays down in Colossians 3:1-17 can be seen as little more than an elaboration on what we learn of God's nature, and by implication ours who are made in his image. Consider Paul's words in this regard in 3:9:

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Christ is the only complete image of God. Elsewhere in Scripture we are called to leave the idols (images) that we fashion out of our imagination. All such images, which become models for our lives, are less than the perfect image of God which we find in Jesus Christ. Listen to Isaiah: "To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it." If all of the images of God that we create in our minds are so impoverished and inadequate, is it any wonder that the author of Deuteronomy writes:

Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol -- a thing detestable to the Lord, the work of the craftsman's hands -- and sets it up in secret (27:15).

If all of what we have said about images and God, about our selves having been made in God's image is true, and if it is that case that our own image-bearing nature has been incapacitated, however radically, but that that of Christ remains unblemished or unshattered, is it then any wonder that we should want to be like him? For to be like Christ is to be like God, to be like our Father, the one in whose image we were made.

Again we might say that it is right, proper, and fitting that we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ the only one who images God for us. How important it is that we know who Jesus is; that our image of him be an adequate image.

Questions: Take a moment and ask yourself what images guide your thinking. As you do this, think of all that passes before you every day whether it be through the media, at work or school, or in your patterns of social interaction. Write these down and think about the ways in which the images that you have thought about affect your life. Now think about your image of God. What mediates that image to you? Is it Jesus? Is it some other image or construct? How does your image of God affect your thinking of God?

II. Jesus and God the Father

The Gospel of John offers us further information about the identity of Jesus which should now be drawn into our reflection about the image that we form of him in our minds. In a variety of place in this account of Jesus we find him using the pointed phrase, "I am." This is used in a striking way in John 8:58 and 13:19. In the former instance the validity of Jesus's ministry and testimony to himself is challenged. Following the implication of his ability to forgive sins, the prerogative of God alone, Jesus ante-dates his work and person to before Abraham, thus claiming also to be the authority of the tradition. The text reads: "'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'" At this, it is said, those hearing him took up stones in order to kill him, the method appropriate for blasphemy. Later, in predicting his betrayal in the hearing of his disciples (the second of our texts given above), Jesus states that he is telling the disciples before the betrayal happens so that they will believe that "I am He."

Furtheron we will want to come back to these cases, but first let us consider several other instances of the use of the phrase "I am" as part of a double meaning in the texts John 8:24, 28. In the first text Jesus tells his hearers that they will die in their sins "if they do not believe that I am the one I claim to be." In the second instances Jesus is reported saying predictively, "'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.'" Other examples that draw attention to the phrase "I am" as used by Jesus, but now with explicit predicates, are listed below under the "Questions" section. You may want to take some time to study these in order to learn more about the image of Jesus that John is portraying.

Questions: Find the texts listed below in the Gospel of John. As you read them, ask yourself the following questions:

- a) What is the apparent context for what is said?
- b) What does Jesus say?
- c) What does what you read tell you about the mind of Jesus?

1. Woman at the well -- John 4:1-26 (4:26)
2. Disciples fear in the boat on the sea -- John 6:16-24 (6:20)
3. Jesus able to forgive sins -- John 8:12-30 (8:24,52)
4. Jesus shares insight about his betrayal -- John 13:18-30 (13:19)
5. Jesus reply to the soldiers -- John 18:1-11 (18:5,8)

There is something quite striking about the image of Jesus's self-understanding which is being portrayed in the Gospel of John. The perspective of the other Gospels which pointedly pictured Jesus as the Christ, with political overtones, or as the Son of Man appear to be either too political for John, in the first case, or too future oriented in the case of the Son of Man. Instead, John appears to lift up the phrase "I am" (Ego eimi) as appropriately describing the identity of Jesus. One of the striking things about the phrase is the resonance it carries from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is this very phrase that is used by God to identify himself to Moses in the desert of Sinai recorded in Exodus 3:14. Furthermore, the book of the prophet Isaiah draws attention to it in chapters 40-55 noting that God alone is capable of making such self-predication. It would be insolence or idolatry for any other being or person to do so. Is it any wonder, then, that those hearing Jesus make such a claim would take up stones to stone him?

The image of Jesus portrayed by John under the phrase of "I am" is the most adequate way of understanding who Jesus is. It holds in tension all of the other images that we have lifted up, yet says more. It argues for a relationship between God the Father and Jesus that is not abstract or merely intellectual. There is a deep and mysterious union here out of which emerges the most central understanding about the nature of the Christian faith. It reaches to such ideas as imply Jesus alone to be the one true prophet envisioned as coming in Israel's history, that Jesus alone is the one destined for David's throne and eternal rule, and that Jesus alone is the one priest, or mediating figure, who best stands between man and God and able, thereby to draw us to the presence of God the Father. It is, therefore, the most adequate way of understanding Jesus which, also, leaves room for the validity of all of the other images that we have noted. The Gospel of John is telling us that it is Jesus alone who makes known the "name" of God (cf. Ex. 3:14).

Questions: The perspective on Jesus's identity that we find in John is an important illustration of early trinitarian thinking. Take some time at this point and work through the Gospel of John, listing those places where a) the Son is said to be one with the Father (e.g., 10:30), b) the Father is said to be at work in the Son (e.g., 5:19), and c) the Spirit is said to draw us as deeply into a relationship with the Father and Son as the Father and Son are one (e.g., 17:22)

III. The Holy Spirit Enables Us to Enter into this Reality

The Christian is to be like Christ. We are to develop the mind of Christ. If a summary of the Hebrew Scriptures can be seen in the injunction that we are to love the Lord our God

with all of our strength and mind (Luke 10:27), Christ specifies and personalizes what this means. It is neither abstract nor merely intellectual, but personal. Paul, after having experienced that transformation of his mind and attitudes on the Damascus road (Acts 9) later wrote from a prison cell, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form (image) of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men..." (Phil. 2:5-7). This "renewing of the mind," as it is referred to by Paul in Romans 12:2, is that which enables us to put off the "old self," the image of God in ourselves that has been shattered and "which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires." By means of the truth we see in Christ we are, "made new in the attitude of your [our] minds...to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

In Jesus Christ we see the image that we were meant to be, by developing the mind of Christ we are given the means to become whole, to become restored images of God. It is by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, that this is achieved as we saw above, outlined in the Gospel of John 16-17. So, we may conclude, is it not right, proper, and fitting that we be in relationship with Christ? It is in this Spirit that Paul writes in II Corinthians 3:17-18:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

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Talk 3 of 4

In the first two talks in this series we affirmed the importance of developing an adequate image of Jesus before discussing the the mind of Christ. It seems presumptuous to even think about talking about someone's mind, or we might say, opinion on any matter, without having an adequate idea about the person. This is so much more the case when we talk about Jesus. And, the reason, we are even so bold to do so rests upon certain assumptions about how Scripture can be read and about the nature of God's Spirit as it worked in the production of that document we call the Bible, and in our own minds and hearts as we read Scripture. Much of what has been said thus far rests upon such assumptions and has been said to underscore the importance of developing an adequate understanding of Jesus, even among those who share certain assumptions about the nature of Scripture and the work of the Spirit, before talking about the mind of Christ.

Nevertheless, in what has been noted thus far certain things can probably be concluded about our topic, "The Mind of Christ." However, I would like to move such thinking forward by having us "probe" our topic in three areas: 1) dialogue and dogma, 2) grace and judgment, and 3) politics.

Why would I choose these three areas as we begin to think about the mind of Christ? They have to do with the three dimensions of life that we find ourselves in daily. The first concerns the nature of truth itself, philosophers call this metaphysics or "being." The second has to do with knowledge. If we were to give it a philosophical "tag" we would call this area epistemology. Finally, the third area has to do with ethics. It has to do with how we live out our understanding of being and knowledge.

As with everything, there is a simple and a complex answer. The simple is seldom wrong in an absolute sense, the complex answer tries to say more by way of analysis and explanation. The immediate answers to our three points are:

- 1) Confess his name.
- 2) Trust in his grace.
- 3) Follow in his steps.

The more complex answers draw us into the three philosophical questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

1. Dialogue and Dogma (Matt. 16:13)

Who do men say that I am? (The question of Being)

If we look at the simple answer first, we can say that the text of Matthew 16:13, where Jesus asks, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" focuses our point of "dialogue and dogma" for us.

The simple answer is that we are to confess his name. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the way that Peter put it. He was affirmed in what he said. Jesus opened the discussion by drawing us into dialogue: Who are people saying that I am. Several possibilities are given, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. The proper answer was that given by Peter. However, note the process by which this was achieved. Christ drew Peter into a line of thinking which required thought on Peter's part. This is not to say that there was not a correct answer. Rather, it is to say that the mind of Christ does not give us the truth so much as draw us into a process of questioning whereby it is up to us to affirm the truth.

As it touches upon the central nature of reality, then, there is always dialogue and always dogma. If we put this another way we might say that if Christ is always the answer, the problem we face is that the variables always seem to be changing, the picture becomes more complex. We are forced by way of our circumstances to enter into a dialogue with ourselves. Or, others present new views and challenges to us so as simply to give a dogmatic answer in the face of new questions is never to have dealt with those questions.

It might be asked, what moves me to the place where I am able to say that Christ is Lord? What moves me beyond arrested development on the personal level. Having been hurt by another person through a misunderstanding or even malicious intent, it is easy for my personality to remain locked into the hurt it has received, to fail in being able to forgive and to nurse the resentment that I feel. In such a situation I fail to follow the Lord's injunction, to forgive as I have been forgiven (Matt. 6:12). More than that, however, I am failing to find the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the experience. I am not confessing that Jesus is Lord, that he is in control (Romans 8:28). If I fail to find his Lordship here and yet still call him Lord with my lips, I have not found my way through to legitimately affirming the reality of his being.

Just as we may be "exercised" in this way in the domain of our feelings, so too such may occur in the area of our intellect. Just when we feel that we have understood it all, new challenges come our way. We may be tempted to not deal with the new knowledge or different perspective. However, to fail to do so and yet affirm Christ leads to a hollowness and shallow orthodoxy. We are called into a process of dialogue with ourselves or with the other as we seek to dogma about the truth of Christ that is there.

To put this in another way, to live with the tension of dialogue and dogma calls for an open personality. It means not closing our hearts or minds to the situations that confront

us. It means seeing ourselves in a new perspective. As it is written in the letter to the Colossians, "set your hearts on things above....set your minds on things above....For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3). As it is put a little further, we are to deal honestly with the challenges that come our way, no matter how they hurt and in them find and claim the Lordship of Jesus Christ for we are "being renewed in knowledge in the image of [our] Creator" (3:10). We are, then, constantly being challenged to find and live in the new reality in which Jesus is Lord. It is only by the power of the Spirit that this is possible (I Cor. 12:3).

Question: Study Matthew 16:13-17:23. Ask yourself about the reality to which Jesus calls us.

2. Grace and Judgment (Luke 4:16-19)

How do we confess Christ in our histories? (The question of epistemology)

We are not only called to a new reality in which Jesus is Lord, but we are called to trust in his grace. This does not imply a lack of judgment, but it does mean that we are often called to withhold judgment leaving that to God in his time. It means adopting the humility to recognize that I am the poor to whom the good news is being preached.

When Jesus took the scroll, recorded in Luke 4:18-19, and stood up to read, he read from the text of Isaiah 61:1-2. He read that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to the prisoner, the recovery of sight to the blind, release to the captive, and to proclaim the Lord's favor. However, here he stopped short. He did not follow Isaiah at this point where Isaiah adds "and the day of vengeance of our God." We may wonder why he did this. Many reasons may be put forward. We are reminded in this of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus cautions us in our judging, adding that while we see the speck in our brother's eye we fail to see the plank in our own.

This is not to say that there is not judgment. In fact, we cannot fail but to judge. Our observations of the world and of ourselves are based upon discrimination and discernment. We are seldom able to report things as they are, but are constantly drawing inferences and making judgments. Yet, it is clear from many other places in Scripture that while there is a time for judgment, we are to refrain from such. For not only will we be judged by the way in which we judge others (Matt. 7:1; Ro. 2:1), but we ourselves cannot live according to our own standards of judgment (Ro. 2:1). It is to say that in the course of our understanding we lean to the side of grace, knowing that God will bring judgment in his time (Deut. 1:17; Acts 17:31). So we live by listening, by looking, by withholding judgment without denying the reality of that reckoning which is to come.

Question: Compare Luke 4:16-19 with Isaiah 61:1-2. Note the differences and similarities that you find.

3. Politics (Matt. 22:15-22; Ro. 13 -- Rev. 13)

How do we live as disciples of Jesus Christ today? (The question of ethics)

Here our short answer is to follow in his steps. However, the text with which we begin draws us into a deeper complexity. In the midst of days of political resentment toward Rome and its often corrupt system of taxation Jesus is asked whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not. Jesus, taking a coin with the face of Caesar on it then asks whose image is imprinted on it. His challengers reply, "Caesar's." In reply Jesus says to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what belongs to God.

Now the journey in Jesus's steps just begins. As we consider the ethical import of what has been stated we are reminded that Caesar too is made in the image of God. Jesus's answer, then, to his challengers was doubly significant. Not only do we see Caesar on the coin, but we see an image bearer of God.

Question: Consider Romans 13 and Revelation 13 in light of what you now understand about the incident with the coin in Matthew 22:15-22.

As you conclude this lesson ask yourself the following: What does it mean to be image bearers of Jesus Christ today? Read and study about the ways in which we are to perceive Jesus today in the image bearers around us as recorded in Matthew 25:34-40.

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Talk 4 of 4

"Prophets, Priests, and Kings" (Matt. 4:2-11)

In this series of talks on "The Mind of Christ" we have thought, first, about the image of Jesus in our minds. Following that point we then asked about the image of Jesus presented by the Gospel writers. In the second talk we drew that discussion to what was argued as the most adequate image of Jesus, that presented by the writer of the Gospel of John. Here we found an image that contained all of the others without contradiction and in line with the hopes and expectation of Israel for a coming prophet, priest, and king who would surpass all of the others God had given to his people.

Having alerted ourselves to the importance of our conception of the image of Jesus which we have in our minds, in the third talk we turned to three areas in which we might perceived the mind of Christ at work, affirming the truth of being, our ways of knowing, and forms of activity. We delved only briefly and tentatively into each of these areas, asking what it meant to develop the mind of Christ in these areas.

In this final lesson we will focus upon what Christ calls us to be, i.e., what the will of the mind of Christ is for us. For it is, to be like him. To be like him means that we are to do the things that he is called to do with him, under him, and as his co-workers.

We noted earlier that he was seen to be Israel's true prophet, her true priest, and king. These three ideas, prophet, priest and king, called the three offices of Christ, have received sustained theological treatment in different points in the church's history, particularly in the early church and then during the Reformation with Erasmus, several of the Reformed, and in the Polish Reformation. It might even be said that after the Reformation this theological vision found visible and structural social embodiment in seventeenth century New England where the school house, congregational church, and town meeting hall, each representing, respectively, the corporate work of Christ through his saints as prophet (teacher), priest, and king.

A. Three OT Ascriptions:

The ascription to Jesus of these three offices originates with thinking embedded in the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, there is the expectation that another prophet would come, a Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one like Elijah (Malachi 3:5-6). This expectation is carried into the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 16:14). The vision of a priest whose work would surpass the Aaronic priesthood begins with the mysterious personage of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18), is picked up in Psalm 110:4, and again in Hebrews 5:6-10; 6:20; and 7-8. Finally, Isaiah 9:7 and 11:1 pick up a theme central to the Davidic kingship (II Samuel 7), that an heir would come to the throne of David whose kingdom would have no end.

Question: If you are unfamiliar with the texts given above, take some time to study them in order to understand the expectations that would be seen to be fulfilled in Jesus.

B. Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King

Jesus was seen to be the fulfillment of each of these hopes in Israel's history. In other words, he was to discharge the offices of prophet, priest and king. However, before he fulfilled these functions his person and future ministry was subjected to testing. The focus for this is seen in the temptation of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, 4:1-11. Although from one point of view, i.e., his identity by divine nature, Jesus did not have to undergo such temptation, Jesus's refusal to protect himself and to guard his own prerogatives made possible (Phil. 2:5-11) his assumption of these offices in a way that made them both efficacious for us as well as a model of his will for us.

In other words, by refusing to make bread out of stones, Jesus both pointed to a higher spirituality reality of which we stand in need and he also began the process whereby he would become our bread. Second, by refusing to follow the advice of Satan, throwing himself down and trusting himself to a miraculous deliverance, he pointed to a deeper reality in Scripture thus proving himself to be the true teacher. As he put himself under the word, he became master of it. Finally, by refusing to bow to Satan in order to receive all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus acknowledged the pitfalls of all idolatry. By honoring God first in all things, Jesus was made the instrument by which God's rule and judgment would be known.

Questions: Study the following sets of passages:

1. Jesus as Priest (Matt. 4:2-4) and compare Hebrews 7&8
2. Jesus as Prophet (Matt. 4:5-7) and compare Matthew 16:13-20 and John 8:12-59; 10:1-21.
3. Jesus as King (Matt. 4:8-11) and compare Revelation 1:5-8.

C. The Christian as Prophet, Priest, and King

If we are to know the mind of Christ and become built up into his image, then what Christ is so are we. The temptations and lessons experienced by him are those which will be ours as well.

In other words, if we are to exercise the office of priests, we must first know what it means to be broken and find in him our fullness and wholeness. Apart from such lessons our priestly activity stands in danger of portraying only a condescending attitude.

Second, until we have experienced the trust of Christ in our lives and learned to walk in it, the truth that we preach to others will only come across as puffed up knowledge apart from love.

Finally, until we have made Christ the king of our life and submitted to his rule, any way in which we attempt to rule over others will only breed resentment and anger.

Questions: Study the following sets of passages. As you do, ask yourself what it means for you to follow in Christ's steps. What needs to happen in your life if you are to assume the offices Christ has called you to and appropriate the gifts he has given to you?

1. The Christian as Priest involved in intercession (I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 13:9; even with those who are sick, Js. 5:15)
2. The Christian as Prophet given specific gifts (I Cor 12-14)
3. The Christian as King envisioned in I Peter 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6 (and cp. Dan 7:25), but note Matt. 20:25

As we conclude these lessons on "The Mind of Christ" turn for a final time to the letter to the church at Corinth and meditate on Paul's instruction in II Cor. 3:1-2, 17-18.