



THE DIVINE DRAMA - Part 2: Christ & His Church

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Theology draws together, and then operates within, the interrelated focus throughout the Scripture:

DRAMA (gospel) - DOCTRINE (teaching flows) - DOXOLOGY (worship b/c gospel) - DISCIPLESHIP (in light of)

THE 3 DIVISIONS OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Creation and the Fall | Christ and His Church | Salvation and Eschatology

John 1 - There is an intentional parallel between **Genesis 1 & John 1**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Dr Michael Allen describes the God of Christian faith as, “The God who chooses to be with us and not without us.”

God has moved toward us with rescuing, restoring grace on the basis of His covenant promise¹.

Covenant:

FORMS OF GOD’S COVENANT

WORKS (or “Life”) | Gen 2:17, Romans 5:12-19

¹ Bibliography: Simon J. Gatherole, *The Preexistent Son, Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark & Luke* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Douglas McCready, *He Came Down From Heaven, The Pre-existence of Christ and the Christian Faith* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (Philipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1954), Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introduction of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) Jonathan Edwards, *A Historical Work of Redemption*, (Works of Jonathan Edwards 9, John F Wilson, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989)

GRACE: | Gen 3:15, Rom 5, 10:13

After Adam's sin, the covenant of works was rendered useless.

Therefore, the covenant of grace (Gen 3:15) was offered in the Old Testament under the dispensation of God's law and in the New Testament under the dispensation of God's gospel. (*Dispensation: a system in place for a particular time, serving as an exception from the covenant of works that could no longer be provided because of sin.*)

Noah: Gen 9 | **Abraham:** Gen 15 | **Moses:** Ex 19, Deut 28 | **David:** 2 Sam 7 | **Jeremiah** 31 | = God's law was given as a temporary tutor to show us our need for God's grace until Christ came and fulfilled the law and saved us in grace. The relevance of God's law for the believer today is that it keeping it is no longer the means by which we are accepted by God, it faithfully guides us into a life of freedom that glorifies God.

CHRIST ENDED the Old Covenant under the DISPENSATION OF GOD'S LAW & ushered in the New Covenant under the DISPENSATION OF HIS GOSPEL

"Therefore he (Christ) is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant."
- *Hebrews 9:15*

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For **God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.** By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."
- *Romans 8:1-4*

God's Response to Sin in Genesis 3: "Where are you? Who told you? What did you do? I'm Coming to save you."

THE SHAPE OF GRACE: JOHN 3:16 - Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς
Οὕτως = "_____ in which God loved..." The form of God's love for us is shaped like a cross and the love the church is to show towards others is shaped like a cross - and fueled by the cross.

On the Incarnation of Christ

Michael Ramsey (former archbishop of Cantenbury) "God is Christ-like and in Him there is no **unChristlikeness.**"

John 1:14 gives us 3 facets of orthodox Christology: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
By using this language, John is intentionally forcing the reader to grapple with very specific things.

WORD: (Λόγος) - context: "a divine utterance", consider Genesis 1.

BECAME FLESH: the Divine God embodies human form. Ἐγένετο: to transition from one form to another.

DWELLED AMONG US: ἐσκήνωσεν: To encamp, to tent, to tabernacle.

Jesus Christ is of one substance and with 2 natures: fully divine and fully human.

Historical heretical ideas about the nature of Christ:

Ebionism: Denies that Jesus was fully God. The belief that at his baptism, Jesus was “adopted into the Godhead.”

Docetism: The denial that Jesus was fully human. He was a phantasm and of a celestial substance. God could not bleed or suffer, therefore the sufferings of Christ were not real, only apparent.

Arianism: The belief that there was a time when Christ was not, but rather he was created by God. In this view there is a hierarchy in the God headhead. Jesus is not equal to the father but subordinate to the father. John 3:16 “begotten”

Apollinarianism: Jesus was human but had a divine mind. They interpret Luke 2:52 to mean that a human Jesus grew to be able to save us in all respects because he did not have a human soul, only a perfect divine soul.

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA - 325 AD

Called by emperor Constantine to deal with Arianism which was threatening the unity of the church. Athanasius provided many of the arguments put in systematic theological formulations to refute Arius defending the eternal, divine nature of Christ and the trinitarian nature of the Godhead. Athanasius became the bishop of Alexandria in 328. The Nicene creed teaches that the Son is the same substance (*homoousias*) as the Father and it eternally begotten of the Father.

“In my opinion, the most probable reason why the holy evangelist, indicating the whole living being by the part affected, says the Word of God became flesh is so that we might see side by side the wound together with the remedy, the patient together with the physician, what sank towards death together with Him who raised it to life... that which has been mastered by death together with Him who conquered death, what was bereft of life with Him who was the provider of life. He does not say that the Word came into flesh, he says he became flesh in order to exclude any idea of a relative indwelling, as in the case of the prophets and the other saints. He really did become flesh - that is to say, a human being.”
- Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria (412-444)

THE DIVINE DRAMA Part 2: Christ & His Church

CHRIST’S HUMILIATION for our JUSTIFICATION

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” - Galatians 3:13

“Our most merciful father, seeing us oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law ... sent his only Son into the world and laid upon Him, the sins of all mankind saying, “You be Peter, that denier, Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor, David that adulterer, tht sinner who ate the fruit in Paradise, that thief who hung upon the cross, and briefly, you be the person who was committed the sins of all men. See therefore that you pay and satisfy for them.”

- Martin Luther, commentary on Galatians 3:13

The meaning of justification

Upon our profession of faith in Christ, we are declared righteous by the one time act of God’s grace provided in Christ’s death and resurrection, and that act of grace is the basis for our justification.²

² Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13

The verb δικαιωο for “justify” is built on the same root as “righteous” and therefore the idea is that the declaration of the righteous God for those who believe in Christ (sinful though they may be) are viewed as righteous because united to Christ by grace and through faith, they have come into a right relationship with Him.³

Justification is a metaphor from the court of law where a Judge pronounces someone as either guilty or not guilty. Paul contrasted the acts of condemning and justifying in Romans 8:33-34 when he wrote, “who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5).

Having this verdict of “not guilty” by the righteous Judge belongs to the eschatological day of judgement, yet has already taken place in history in the cross and resurrection of Christ.⁴

Our Need for Justification

Justification is necessary because all humanity, without exception, has been born into a sinful condition⁵ and under God’s condemning judgement⁶ as a result of our first parents committing original sin by rejecting God in favour of being their own god in Eden. Their sinful condition has been imputed to all humanity. As a result of this imputation of sin, the Scriptures teach explicitly that none are righteous and no one can stand before God righteous on their own merits.⁷

“The Bible speaks of sin as power and problem, principality and persuasion. Sin brings death, destruction and distance. To understand our need for justification we must see Adam as our federal representative or “covenant head” much in the same way an ambassador might act on behalf of a nation with consequences that would be passed onto everyone in that nation, Adam’s actions had consequences that were passed onto all humanity.”⁸ - Allen, Systematic Theology, Knox

The key exegetical basis for that argument is Romans 5 where the apostle Paul clearly presents sin as coming through *one* man and salvation coming through *one* Man with Christ being the 2nd Adam.

³ George, Eldon, Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p.478, Eerdmans Publishing, MI, 1993
⁴ George, Eldon, Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p.480, Eerdmans Publishing, MI, 1993
⁵ Genesis 3
⁶ Romans 1:18-3:20
⁷ Romans 3:10
⁸ Dr. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology*, p.96, T&T International Publishing, NY, 2010

Ultimately, as the righteous Judge, God alone decides if His decree for righteousness is fulfilled because it is the business of a judge to acquit the innocent and condemn the guilty.⁹ In his letter to Ephesus, the apostle teaches that we are born dead in sin, and that sin came through imputation.¹⁰ Therefore, only way anyone can be justified and declared righteous before God is through a divine imputation of righteousness, by the grace of God.

The Means for our Justification

Just as Adam's sin was imputed to all of us, God in His divine grace imputes Christ's righteousness to believing sinners.¹¹

"Christ's fulfilling all righteousness - His obedience to the Father's will and commands in His role as the second Adam, His sacrificial death and His resurrection that vindicates the cross and ushers in a new eschatological era - becomes ours by faith in union with Him. It is on this basis that a believer is reckoned righteous." - J. Gresham Machen¹²

"The resurrection of Christ was necessary for our justification, inasmuch as it was the formal acceptance of his sufferings, as the expiation for our sins."¹³ - Charles Hodge

*"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God ... Since therefore we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God?"
- Romans 5:1,9*

The atoning work of Christ in the past will bring acquittal from our sin in the future on the basis of our union with Christ today.

The "eschatological judgement is no longer alone future, it has become a verdict in history. Justification, which belongs in the age to come and issues in the future salvation, has become a present day reality...The doctrine of justification means that God has pronounced the eschatological verdict of acquittal over the person of faith in the present, in advance of final judgement."¹⁴

Justification comes to us through the means of faith.

The faith required to receive this gift of justification is not something we must conjure - **faith is a gift God gives:**

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Romans 10:14-17

The Heidelberg Catechism faithfully expounds on the means of faith from that text in this way:

Q: Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence does this faith proceed?

A: From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments. (Lord's Day 25, Question 65)

"We are justified by faith, and faith is counted, or imputed to us for righteousness; but faith is not itself the righteousness on account of which we are justified." - James Buchanan¹⁵

⁹ Deuteronomy 25:1

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:1

¹¹ Romans 4:1-8, 5:15-19

¹² Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul & the Order of Salvation*, 2nd edition, Philipsburg Publishing 2013

¹³ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p.103, Crossway Publishing 1994

¹⁴ George, Eldon, Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p.484,488 Eerdmans Publishing, MI, 1993

¹⁵ Dr. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology*, p.94, T&T International Publishing, NY, 2010 citing James Buchanan, *Justification*, p.66

“Whoever glories in Himself, glories against God.” - Calvin¹⁶

“A true view of justification is the dividing line between the biblical gospel of salvation by faith alone and all false gospels of salvation based on works.” - Wayne Grudem¹⁷

In the Council of Trent, 1545 the Roman catholic church asserted that anyone who believed that faith in Christ alone was sufficient for the assurance of salvation - was anathema (cursed). The Catholic church still holds to this¹⁸

This faith leaves no room for boasting - only marvelling, worshipping and glorifying!

God’s Goal in our Justification

“Justification is by faith alone, precisely because faith points away from the recipient of justification. In other words, justification is by faith alone, precisely because faith alone honors the deeper fact that justification is by Christ alone. - Michael Allen¹⁹

While the act of justification *includes* forgiveness, it goes *further* than forgiveness.

¹⁶ Calvin, Institutes 1:3:2 ,ed. John T. McNeill, translated: Ford Lewis Battles, Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Publishing, 1960

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* p.722, Zondervan Academic, 1994

¹⁸ 1545 Council of Trent, Canon 9, 11, 12, 30, 33

¹⁹ Dr. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology*, p.94, T&T International Publishing, NY, 2010

“Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. - Romans 16:25-27

To be justified is not merely the act of being spared the judgement of God, but is a tremendous gift that enables us to enjoy and glorify God.²⁰ This is because justification is inseparably connected to ongoing and increasing sanctification.

In his institutes, Calvin addressed this stating that Christ cannot be “torn into parts”, insisting that justification and sanctification are inseparable.²¹ Calvin went on to assert that “*Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.*”²² Like Calvin, Luther also asserted that the one time act of justification was inseparable from the ongoing work of sanctification in saying “*We cannot grant the premise of grace and deny it’s conclusion.*”²³

All those who call God “Father” will desire to bear their Father’s resemblance, and this ongoing life of imitation is the gospel logic that undergirds the epistles.²⁴

THE DIVINE DRAMA Part 2: Christ & His Church

CHRIST’S RESURRECTION, ASCENSION & THE CHURCH ON MISSION

Reasons why believing the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ is reasonable:

²⁰ Westminster Catechism Q1: what is the chief end of man? A: to glorify and enjoy God forever.

²¹ *ibid* Calvin, Institutes 3:11:6

²² *ibid* Calvin, Institutes 3:16:1

²³ Blessed Martin Luther, *On The Councils And The Church*; AE 41:114-116

²⁴ Ephesians 1-3 communicates divine action apart from human contribution through a conscious flow of terms such as “foreordained, predestined, elected, adoption and blessing.” pointing unquestionably to God’s grace.

The Ascension: Christ's vindication & coronation.

In 1961, when Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, defiantly declared that his cosmonaut returned from outer space and had not found God, atheist turned Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis responded ...

"Looking for God — or Heaven — by exploring space is like reading or seeing all Shakespeare's plays in the hope you will find Shakespeare as one of the characters or Stratford as one of the places. Shakespeare is in one sense present at every moment in every play. But he is never present in the same way as Falstaff or Lady Macbeth, nor is he diffused through the play like a gas. If there were an idiot who thought plays exist on their own, without an author, our belief in Shakespeare would not be much affected by his saying, quite truly, that he had studied all the plays and never found Shakespeare in them.... To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others, nowhere. Those who do not find him on earth are unlikely to find him in space. (Hang it all, we're in space already; every year we go a huge circular tour in space.) But send up a saint in a spaceship and he'll find God in space as he found God on earth. Much depends on the seeing eye." - CS Lewis, "The Seeing Eye", a response to why the Russians did not find God in space, 1961

CHRIST'S RULE AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION

Christ's earthly ministry is complete & His heavenly ministry continues

*"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, **sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." - Hebrews 1:1-4*

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." - Hebrews 4:14-16

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I am with you or away from you, I may hear that you are standing and persevering in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." - Phil 1:27

God's premise for calling us to walk worthy of the gospel is that we are His children, He is our Father, and those Christ justifies He also sanctifies so that we increasingly bear the family resemblance.

πολιτεύω: "to exercise one's citizenship"²⁵

The verb Paul uses is related to our word *politics*. The apostle instructs the church to simply, "Behave the way citizens are supposed to behave", but the phrase ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ "worthy of the gospel of Christ" reveals that regardless of whether their engagement is with the Philippian community or their church community, their conduct is to be congruent with their new citizenship in heaven. This charge to the church was not given so that though their good works they could attain citizenship in heaven, it was given on the basis that by grace, their citizenship was already located there.

²⁶

The phrase Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε calls all believers to live in a way that is "suitable so as to match the value" of their citizenship.²⁷ If it were not for the gracious implications of Christ's perfect work, this call would not be encouraging, but utterly crushing. After all, who lives in such a way that their very life is ἀξίως (*worthy*) of what Christ gave?

πνεῦμα here refers to both the unity of their human spirit, inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ πνεῦμα refers to the higher aspect of our spiritual nature, in which the Holy Spirit works.²⁹ 'In one spirit' parallels his following phrase 'with one soul' and joins both to the following verb 'striving together'. To stand 'in one spirit' refers to unity of their human spirits: united in purpose in your spirits. At the same time, it is the Holy Spirit which inspires this unity. It is by the Spirit that Christians have salvation and adoption³⁰, the basis for heavenly citizenship and the premise for the apostle's call for conduct that is congruent with that citizenship.³¹

The construction 'the faith of the gospel' (τῆ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) is informative. The faith here finds its *basis* in the gospel³² and is actually *produced* by the gospel.³³

The Purpose for walking worthy of the Gospel

²⁵ An Exegetical Summary of Philippians, Greenlee J. Harold, SIL International; 2 edition (November 3, 2008)

²⁶ Expository Commentary of the Bible, Weirsbe Warren W., David C. Cook Publishing (July 1989)

²⁷ Thayers Greek Lexicon, Hendrickson Publishers; Reissue, Subsequent edition (August 1, 1995)

²⁸ Ea Eadie, John. *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*. Reprinted from 1884 ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979. ; EBC Kent, Homer A., Jr. Philippians. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978. ; EGT Kennedy, H. A. A. The Epistle to the Philippians. In *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 3. New York: Doran, n.d.

²⁹ Lt Lightfoot, J. B. *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*. 7th ed. London: MacMillan, 1883. ; Ellicott, C. J. *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon*. 2d ed. London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1861. ; ICC Vincent, Marvin R. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*. The International Critical Commentary, edited by Samuel R. Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles A. Briggs. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897.

³⁰ Romans 8:15

³¹ Alf Alford, Henry. *The Greek Testament*. Vol. 3. London: Rivingtons, 1856. , Ellicott, C. J. *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon*. 2d ed. London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, 1861.

³² TH Loh, I-Jin and Eugene A. Nida. *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1977.

³³ WBC Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43, edited by Ralph P. Martin. Waco, Texas: Word, 1983.

We seek to live our lives with conduct that is worthy of the gospel, standing firm in one spirit and with one mind for the faith of the gospel. We have no need of earning anything from Christ, our conduct flows from loving imitation of Him.

The believer who marvels at the benefits of their new citizenship will walk out the responsibilities that come with it with joy. **This conduct is not to gain heaven, our citizenship is already there.** To live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel is to live in congruence with our citizenship and new identity - an identity we have received by grace.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is sandwiched between two promises:

*“And Jesus came and said to them, **All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**”*

(1) Christ rules and reigns over everything, including His church

(2) Christ promised to be with us in everything and will continue His saving work through His church.