

The Supremacy of Christ and the Church in the Postmodern World

By Mark Driscoll - 2006

This edited talk was given by Pastor Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church, Seattle at the 2006 Desiring God conference: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN A POSTMODERN WORLD. The conference is hosted by Desiring God and Pastor John Piper who is Pastor for Preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.



What a great honor it is to welcome you all, my name is Mark Driscoll and I am one of the Pastors of the Mars Hill Church in Seattle. I also run the Acts 29 Church Planting Network; if you're interested in planting a Church or in resurgence.com which is an online missional co-operative you're welcome to go there and get some free resources and materials

Some of you may not know me, but have googled to find I'm also known as the Antichrist so I appreciate you coming out to hear what I might have to contribute.

I shall open in pray...

"Father we begin our time by acknowledging and celebrating there is one God and by grace you have made yourself our God. We want our time to be pleasing to you and profitable for us. For that to occur it's my deepest desire that the person and work of Jesus be at the forefront of our hearts and minds and our time would be about Him. For that to happen we invite you God the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, to save those present who do not know you, to empower those who love you for kingdom service and to give us something of the heart and mind of Jesus. Father may the peoples we are called to minister too and the nations who are listening in taste and see that Jesus is good. We give you our time, Churches and I give myself to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen"

Dr John Piper asked me to speak on two things; the supremacy of Christ and the Church in the postmodern world. So I will talk about God and the Church and you will get;

Two issues concerning Christology Two issues concerning Missiology and the Church

We will begin our discussion speaking about Jesus since that was the first subject assigned to me. Some of you may be so familiar with the story of Jesus but I will tell it again so it might be fresh in your eyes.

We know that Jesus Christ lived some two thousand years ago and was born in a dumpy rural hick town to a teenage virgin mother; two miracles, virgin and also mother and we also know that Jesus lived a very simple life until he was about thirty years of age. He never traveled to a major city, never wrote a book, He never held political office, or made a great deal of money. He was a man who lived in relative obscurity in so far as we can guess, working with His adopted father Joseph, likely swinging a hammer, working a blue collar job. We also know that about the age of thirty Jesus began His public ministry which included teaching and preaching, healing and service and Jesus' ministry spanned roughly three few short years.

Yet in His wake, out of this very simple, humble, marginalized Galilean peasant is a legacy that is absolutely astonishing. Literally no one has impacted human history to the degree that this man Jesus Christ has done. We in fact denote our history around His life; B.C, before Christ and

Adomini The year of our Lord. And Jesus Christ is the most famous person in all of human history. More songs have been sung about Him, paintings have been painted of Him, and books have been written regarding Him than anyone who has ever lived in the history of the world.

So the question remains to be answered; who is this Jesus?

He is perennially and culturally hot today. Two of the top grossing movies in recent years include "The Passion of the Christ" which we adorn and the "Divinci Code" which we disdain. It is in fact?? amazing that Jesus is now the subject of Pop Culture; I will give you some examples.

He routinely shows up on the television show the Simpson's for those of you who have cable, if you don't repent. Jesus also shows up on South Park often fighting Satan. And Jesus shows up regularly in the comic sketches of Carlos Marcia?? on Comedy Central. Jesus a few years back was the cover story for the very tame magazine; Popular Mechanics, and they where trying to discover the real face of Jesus. But they decided He wasn't a guy with product in His hair who wore a dress and looked like a girl, which I was very clad to find out because it's hard to worship a guy you can beat up.

Additionally we see that even Rappers like Conye West still talk about Jesus. His hit "Jesus Walks with Me" was a huge hit and if you saw the Rolling Stone cover just a few short months back it had Conye West with a crown of thorns around his head and the title was the passion of Conye West. I do not believe that he knows Jesus, but it's interesting like people who are bipolar and want to one day become that which they envisage to be the greatest. It's curious that for him the apex would be to be like Jesus.

Jesus also appears on a hot air balloon that's a hundred and ten feet tall and weights 750 pounds. And Jesus appears on a Monster truck for Red Neck Outreach, I know we want all people in heaven I'm not sure we want a lot of those people. Lots of people have Jesus tattoos. A buddy of mine runs the International Tattoo Convention and he said that people are still getting "Ultimate Jesus fighting" tattoos all over their bodies. How many of you saw Taliga Nights; the Legend of Ricky Bobbie? O.K... For both of you who did, you heard him pray to the eight pound six ounce baby Jesus in a golden fleece dapper thanking Him for his hot wife and that was very curious. You may have noticed "Jesus is my Home Boy" just became an absolute pop icon cultural t-shirt worn by Pamela Anderson, Madonna, Ben Affleck and Brad Pitt. And Jesus was and is hip and cool even now appearing on fashion statement t-shirts for the rich and famous celebrities.

Another curious thing is the symbol that is most associated with Jesus; the cross has become the most legendry and famous symbol in all of human history. I was watching the MTV Music Awards and noticed old school rocker Axel Roads was wearing a cross and so was the Rapper Fifty Cent. So even the cross of Christ has become a very popular pop cultural icon.

So my simple point is that Jesus is as hot as ever in pope cultural. I assume that most of you didn't make it but Madonna was on tour this last year with her "Confessions Tour. She should have confessed for having the tour none the less it grossed almost two hundred million dollars and at the conclusion of each show they would have a large disco cross and she would be sort of symbolically crucified before the crowd ending her shows with a mock crucifixion.

The question then begs to be answered concerning this matter of Christology; what should the Church have for its view of Jesus? And how should we articulate who Jesus was and is to this world? They apparently are very curious about Jesus and feel free to include Him in much of their pop cultural life.

Two issues concerning Christology – The incarnation & exaltation of Christ

Now you may have read the cover story in Christianity Today September 2006, . And it was in large part on Tim Keller and D.A.Carson and Dr Piper, C J Mahney? and Joshua Harris and this new upsurge of Calvinism; and young cool Calvinists.

And it juxtaposed the movement of new Calvinism which I consider myself apart of with the emergent vision of Jesus and their vision for theology and the Church. And to some degree these two competing ideologies that really are competing for the affections of young pastors, the next generation of church planters and theologians.

I would say that what distinguishes these two teams is this matter of Christology. It simply is their view of the person and work of Jesus. I want to speak now about the incarnation and exaltation of Jesus Christ because they are the two hot theologies today that have gone to the forefront; the most popular; emergent and this new reformed theology who are debating in large part over the issue of Jesus.

I will speak to you about the incarnation and exaltation of Jesus.

The Incarnation of Christ

First I will deal with the incarnation of Jesus which is the popular view of Jesus among emerging and emergent type Christians.

When they think of Jesus they think of Him primarily as fully man and as such the humanity of Jesus is stressed. Additionally it is the immanence?? of God here with us that are stressed and the places in the Bible where there's a Christology of Jesus. They go obviously to the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and places like Philippians two where it speaks of the humility of Jesus who came into human history and humbled Himself though He is eternal God to identify with us so He can suffer and serve. Emergent type Christians hold an incarnational Christology of Jesus

Now, if you're an orthodox Christian you know you must believe in the incarnation of Jesus. But we cannot only believe in the incarnation of Jesus. What is fueling the missional effort, and discussion of the nature of Christian involvement in culture is a rediscovery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus came into culture, Jesus entered into community with lost people, and Jesus identified with them in their culture.

The problem however is when we only see Christ in His incarnation we are left with someone who is less than God, if that incarnational Christology is not complete. The result is the picture of some Jesus Christ is little more than a humble, marginalized Galilean peasant, with product in his hair, who gets beat up a lot, wears a dress, cries, eats vegetables and has a few friends and this is supposed to inspire us to change the world?

It simply can not catalyze a movement, it can't inspire life transformation because that Jesus is not big enough to be worshipped, He's not big enough to be feared, He's not big enough to be obeyed, He's not big enough to even be respected because He is in some ways a very effeminate, might I say even pseudo homosexual Christ who never did take much responsibility. That is the impression that's given of the extreme version of the incarnation of Jesus, and then men are told to be like that incarnation of Jesus which explains the weak and effeminate and cowardly nature of the Church that has conversations and ignore commands from Jesus. That's an exceedingly harsh problem.

The exaltation of Christ

Secondly on the other side, the team of the new Calvinism is an emphasis not on the incarnation but the exaltation of Jesus. Consequently it is not so much the humanity but the divinity of Jesus Christ which is stressed. Further more it is not so much the immanence of God but the transcendence and the sovereignty of God which is stressed and emphasized. Those who love the incarnation of Jesus but also know of the exaltation of Jesus go to text like Isaiah six where it says, "Isaiah saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on the throne, his train of his robe filling the Temple, him being surrounded by the angels in glory and they calling out; Holy Holy Holy is the

Lord God almighty." And if we go to John Chapter 12 and verse 41 " John tells us that Isaiah saw Jesus and spoke of His glory." So those of us who also love the exaltation of Jesus know the same God Isaiah saw before the incarnation of Jesus was none other than God the Son, the second member of the Trinity who came into human history as the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I would submit to you that's lacking is a rigorous combining of both Christologies. The incarnation and the exaltation, the humanity and divinity, the immanence? and transcendence of Jesus Christ. So we must avoid the theological error of reductionism; which means we are not saying something that is not biblical we are just not saying everything that the Bible says on a particular subject. When it comes to our Christology there are some in the emergent camp who over emphasize the humanity and the incarnation of Jesus so that He is less than God. But there are like wise some within the reformed tradition who over emphasize the exaltation and divinity of Jesus to the point where He doesn't really suffer, He isn't really tempted, you can't really identify with Him because He was essentially like superman. It looked like He was a regular guy, but underneath was a red S under His chest because He never really was tempted or suffered, it was all an illusion.

The Bible tells us other wise and the way out of the woods on this is to read the gospel of Luke and the sequel the book of Acts and what we see is that Jesus is conceived by, led by, empowered by, enabled by and resurrected by what? The power of the Holy Spirit. Then we read the book of Acts and the Lord Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the Church and we now live the Spirit filled life of Jesus.

So Jesus was tempted and suffered being one with whom we can identify as we suffer and live here on mission like Him in culture. How do we get out of our temptations? We don't lean into His divinity we depend upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. I'm not saying in anyway that Jesus in His incarnation ceased to be God, He was and is God. In His incarnation He did things that God could only do like forgiving sin.

But the draw towards the humanity and incarnation of Jesus is having a Jesus that we can identify with so we can follow the life He's patterned for us. The only way that life can be lived is through the power of God the Holy Spirit. Not of our own power but of His empowering and enabling grace in addition to His sovereign and saving grace.

So I would subscribe and encourage that if we hold the incarnation and exaltation of Jesus, we have everything needed for a robust missional theology. It is in the incarnation of Jesus that we have our example of humility, of how to suffer, to love our enemies, and to overcome temptation. But it is through the death, burial, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus that we have authority to call all people everywhere to repent and to tell them there is no God but Jesus, no way but Jesus, no one but Jesus who is worthy of adoration, praise, worship and glory and He is lord, king, judge, ruler and it's all about Him.

What happens if we only hold to the exaltation of Jesus is we become triumphant and arrogant jerks as we are on His mission because we don't act as He did during His incarnation. But if we only hold an incarnational Christology we will love people, serve them, feed them, have community, suffer well and be tempted but we will never call them to repentance because we will lack the authority of the exalted Christ who commands all men everywhere to repent. So the key is to have both; the humility of the example of Jesus in His incarnation and the authority of Jesus in His exalted state returned to glory.

So it is exceedingly important regarding our Christology we have a clear picture of Jesus in our mind that's more than a humble, marginalized Galilean peasant, in a dress with feathered hair who got beat up while wearing sandals driving a Cabulay? Rocking out to pop teenage chick music, drinking decaf, talking about His feelings. We need to have a bigger Jesus than that guy.

In addition to the gospels we must add for our Christology the book of Revelation. It's not about the rapture and the antichrist. the beast, the false prophet and having a scanner on your head so

the antichrist can run you over the barcode at the supermarket. It tells us at the beginning of the book it's the revelation of... Jesus Christ. The point of the book is it's a book about Jesus like every book of the Bible.

Now in addition to the gospels which give us our incarnational Christology we also need to spend good amounts of time in Revelation looking at the exalted Christ. The book breaks down into heavenly scenes and earthly scenes and everyone fights about the earthly scenes and the most important ones are the heavenly scenes. What is the piece of furniture that predominates the heavenly scenes in the book of Revelation? The throne, it's all about the throne; all worship adoration and praise goes to the throne. All authority truth and judgment comes from the throne over all peoples, tribes, nations, languages, tongues, cultures, sexualities, genders, perspectives. That's the Lord Jesus in His exalted state and He is the one who sits on that throne.

One of my favorite pictures of Jesus is not just in the gospels though I go there for my example it is also going to Revelation nineteen for my authority, and there we see Jesus Christ in all of His glory. Where He has a tattoo down His leg. This will offend some of you that He is all tattooed up and it says what? "King of Kings, Lord of Lord's." And what is He going to do? Declare war on those who do not repent of sin and trust in Him. This is a Jesus with authority, this is a Jesus who rules and reigns over all nations and creation this is the ultimate fighter, Jesus. This is a guy I cannot beat up so I can sing songs to Him without feeling moderately gay, I like that.

The fact that He is wearing white, he's pretty confident how that fights going to go. Now I grew up in the hood behind the strip club, my dad was a union dry Waller, I was a bit of a brawler and anytime you show up for a fight and the other guys wearing all white, he's pretty confident.

So on our Christology I would argue for both the incarnation as our example and the exaltation of Jesus on His throne after His resurrection and ascension for our authority.

Two issues concerning Missiology and the Church – Contending & Contextualizing

What informs missiology? We must both contend for both the exaltation of Jesus Christ and contextualize like the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that's why they both matter.

We must contend for the supremacy of Christ

I will start first with contending for the exaltation of Jesus Christ; King, lord, God, Savior, truth teller over all. I would take you to Jude chapter three where it tells us to contend. "Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." That will be my word; contend

This is an absolute assault on postmodern perspectivism, pluralism and relativism. There are not multiple sound faiths, sound doctrines, and truths. There is "one faith that was delivered once for all the saints," regardless of their gender, whether they have more degrees than farinheight? whether or not they went to college, whether or not they happen to be Sunni, Muslim or Shiite Muslim. God commands all men everywhere to repent. I'm assuming that on this issue of missiology, the contending and the contextualizing there is not a lot of resistance to the contending.

I've read your blogs, and you are a varsiferious? Bunch, some of you are like drug dogs at the airport; you can smell an Arminian coming so I will argue for contending and let me tell you;

Nine issues I believe we must contend for;

Firstly scripture as truthful, inerrant authoritative meta-narrative. The first hill to die on is the Bible; the sixty six books of the Old and New Testament. The Postmodern rejects there is an overarching meta-narrative over all peoples, times, places, cultures, perspectives, religions, genders and sexualities that it is in authority over it all. That is exactly what we believe the Bible is; and that only by knowing the story of scripture can we make any sense of our life, of

human history, of God's intentions for us, of who He is and what Jesus has done and of how to be safe from who we are and what we do.

We know that apart from scripture we have no revelation from God and are left in the fog of human speculation with no certainty, no passion, no clarity and no Christ.

But, now I will go after you Calvinists; let me submit to you what that means. As a Bible teacher and preacher you must tell your people the story of the Bible and set every teaching in the context of the overall meta-narrative of the Bible. This means and I'm not arguing against the five points of Calvinism but the five points of Calvinism begin in Genesis three. We need to begin where the Bible begins; and tell people God exists in perfect Trinitarian love of glory, harmony, affection and communication. And that God made the heavens and the earth and made us; male and female in His image and likeness and everything God did was very good.

Then sin occurred and the curse and everything has been marred and stained by sin. I do believe in total depravity, I also believe in creator and creation before total depravity. Then the promises of Jesus are given and the incarnation of Jesus occurs. And He is tempted in every way as we are without sin so He can fully identify with us in our humanity. And Jesus Christ goes to the cross and this is the central issue in all of human history. There as a substitute, He dies in our place for our sins, three days latter He rises and He begins the process of redeeming creation, lifting the curse, making men and women back into relationship with Him as well as all things being reconciled to Him.

The story then goes on that the Church is God's work on earth for the in breaking of the kingdom until we wait the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Who we see at the end of Revelation coming to judge the nations with His sword and coming to do violence against those who fail to repent of sin and trust in Him. That's the big story of the Bible, so when you go to first Thessalonians you've got to plug it into the big story. Or to first Corinithians, or Habakkuk you're got to put it into the big story so they see how it all fits together.

Sometimes when we look for a short cut we will to systematic categories and we will not give them the story of the Bible. One of the ways you must argue for the meta-narrative of the story of the scriptures as truthful, authoritative and inerrant is not just to do systematic theology, that is fine but to continually tell them the story of the Bible so they see that everything relates to that overarching authority of scripture.

Secondly the sovereignty of God must be defended over against open theism. So we contend for the Bible and for a God who is high and exalted and seat on a throne and ruling and regaining over all creation in authority. I want labour that point, I'm assuming that many of you are familiar with it. But the result of that is the over-emphasize on the incarnation of Jesus and no desire to see the exaltation of Jesus on His throne.

Thirdly we must now contend for the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. I know this sounds crazy, welcome to America. We are a nation of theological wing nuts. It is unbelievable now we have to defend the virgin birth of Jesus, merry Christmas. The reason is, and I don't know this man but Rob Bell is one of the leading teachers in the Emerging, Emergent movement and along with Brian McLean? he wrote a book called "Velvet Elvis" the subtitle is "Repainting the Christian Faith." And in it he uses an illustration that many people see theology and doctrine like a large brick wall and that there are bricks that are mortared together like scripture and trinity and penal substitution and atonement and heaven and hell and gender differentiation and that there are these bricks that build this wall of "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints."

And his contention is you can pull a few bricks out of the wall and it will fall down. He says for example; "Would we really lose anything if we took out the virgin birth of Jesus?" Yes we would lose Jesus. I went to public school and I could figure that out, right. I'm not sure my IQ is bigger than my waist but I think we need that. I was reading in Isaiah where it was saying that was important. You know he's say, "I do believe in it, I'm saying..." No there is the faith once for all

delivered to the saints." Not to be added to or subtracted from. Don't mess with Jesus mother I doubt He would take that kindly.

Fourthly we must argue against Pelagism? Some of you say, "That's a big word." most of you know it means denial of original sin and we are by nature from conception sinful the Psalmist says, "Wicked from our mothers' women." **Psalm 51** You may not believe this until you have a child, and then you will see... their evil but they are little and would kill you if they had the size, they just lack the ability. When we think of sin what happens in the post modern world is sin is a stestmic? An institutional issue; racism, classism? homosexuals?, homophobia. It's not a personal issue, rather that I remain essentially still good.

There's a book coming out in January, they approached Doug Paget and Karen Warder who are still I think on the Emergent Village Board with Brian McLearn? and then they picked John Burke and Dan Kimble who are Evangelicals and I'm like the token Calvinist. And we each wrote on three issues; trinity, atonement and scripture and then it's a counterpoint book where we critique one another and we are going to take this on the road and have debates in major cities around the country but one of the authors said Pelagius was right and Augustus was wrong. O.k., for you Calvinists, alright I see a little drool here... your like that dog looking for something to chew on ah. The council of Cathage? denounced Pelagius as a heretic around the fifth century.

What you are looking at is people who have no respect for the scriptures, "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" and you ask yourself why is that? Perhaps it's because they are trying to begin a new religion. It happened in modernity with Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons. And I assure you there will be new religions out of postmodern pseudo Christianity. And if they don't watch themselves there will end up forming a new religion, certainly having new kinds of Christians; non Christians and repainting the Christian faith so that it is no longer the Christian faith.

So on this issue of sin, we must, content for the fact that we are sinners, or else Jesus death is in vain.

Fifthly we must contend for penal, substitutionary atonement. There's a debate on this, I don't know why? It's the best part of the whole book. Now there is no debate over Christa Exemplar; Christ our example. There are multiple issues that happened at the atonement, I understand that; I believe what Frame and Portyess say; "We must have a multi-perspectival theology, avoid the sin of reductionism." Many things happened at the cross and we must embrace them all and take the full counsel of God's Word. But at the heart of the cross is penal substitutionary atonement. John Stott, J I Packer and Leon Morris all say that penal substitutionary atonement is the central issue around which all the other aspects of the atonement hinge.

Most of you know the substitutionary atonement means we are sinners and God is against sinners, God doesn't just love us, He is angry with us. As Psalm five says; "He hates those who do evil." (verse?) which we do. And God's wrath burns against us, it is mentioned I think more than six hundred times in your Bible. By sheer tonnage it's more than the love of God is mentioned. It's the doctrine that we are saved from God. Not just a dissatisfied sex life and a low self esteem and driving a Sub Compact when we feel like we deserve a SUV. We are saved from God and the wrath of God and anger of God and the justice of God.

I preached on this at Mars Hill, it took about an hour and a half and I had a guy try get up on the stage to try and fight me. There are some who don't naturally incline themselves towards this doctrine, the Puritans say, "The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay." When you preach and teach penal substitutionary atonement some people's hearts will melt like ice and others will harden like clay. Our job is to preach not to worry about the results. We leave the results with God; we sleep like Calvinists that's what we do. I yell, God's in charge, nighty nighty, that's how it works.

But what's at stake with penal substitutionary atonement is not a marginal issue about theology; it's

nothing less than the gospel of Jesus Christ. In First Corinthians fifteen Paul says, "What I received I passed on to you and it's of first importance. What was the most important thing in the world that Jesus Christ did? He died, it's an historical fact, and then he gives the theological explanation; "For our sins according to the scripture," **(verse)** So he's going back to the scripture as Meta - narrative. "Christ died for our sins," that includes my sins. Luther calls this the great exchange. If we lose this, we lose Jesus, we lose the forgiveness of sin and we lose Christianity We lose eternal life and we receive the just condemnation of an angry, just, righteous, glorious, holy, good God.

Substitutionary atonement cannot be conceded, it must be contended for. Some of you may be cowards in the pulpit. Do not be, what is at stake is nothing less than the glory of Jesus Christ and the eternal fate of those who hear you and you will give an account. If we lose this we lose everything. It is shocking to me that some are saying it's too violent. God feels about sin that violently, that angrily, that disturbably? And if we lose that we lose the right to seek justice, we lose the right to help the oppressed who are under tyranny and we will have lost the right to be as angry at sin as God is. To do it in the name of compassion, what type of sickening hypocrisy is that? There is nothing compassionate about denying the person and work of Jesus and His glorious substitutionary atonement on the cross.

But some of you will say, this message of the cross want grow a Church. We grew by eight hundred people in two weeks preaching on propitiation. In one of the least church cities in America where all the kids were out front chain smoking before they came in side to get yelled at because God's boot is coming towards their head, and they had better repent today. Just have a cool band and they'll come, it'll be fine.

Sixthly we must contend for the exclusivity of Jesus. He is not just one of the greatest guys that has ever lived like Mahatma Macandya? said. He is altogether different, superior to, distinct from everyone who has ever lived. He is the only means by which salvation can be given and some are arguing that there are other paths to salvation through other religions.?? That there is eternal life apart from Jesus Christ, and in the name of tolerance and diversity we might send people to hell, that is very unkind. I would much rather have people offended now and blessed than encouraged now and kindling forever.

We hear Jesus say "I am the way, the truth, the life;" singular and exclusive. "No one comes to the Father but by me." It's clear He died and we must die on that hill too. We are told e in Acts, "that there is no other name given under heaven in which we might be saved." If we lose the exclusivity of Jesus we lose Jesus.

Oprah says, "That one of the biggest mistakes that humans make is to say there is only one way." actually there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God but there is not, there is Jesus. That's all; if we lose that we lose the Christian faith. I don't know if you know this but Oprah has one of the biggest cults in America, deceiving housewives by the millions. I call her Orpra? like that pagan chick in Ruth.

Seventhly we must contend for gender. We are made Male and female and that is very good. That's what Genesis says, that means that men and women are different. So we believe in the home and the man is to be the loving head like Christ. That means that in the Church male elders are to govern like first Timothy three and Titus one declare. It means that we do not endorse homosexuality that we do pray to God as Father with the same trust as Jesus did and we don't shy away and say that's parochial? We pray to the Father because we like Him. I don't know about you but if you change your Fathers name it doesn't go well for you. Your dad likes to be called by His own name not something his snotty nose brat kid who went to a conversation chose for him.

Eighthly we must defend for the doctrine of Hell. I hear this all the time, "People don't like hell," there not supposed too... we tell you it's bad so you'll want to go somewhere else. If we made it sound nice, then people would go... you know. It's insane but now people are denying hell.

It's unbelievable. It's kind of the whole point I'm making. Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone. Daniel 12:2 says, "Those who arise will go to everlasting life or everlasting death." No one's arguing against eternal heaven, there's not a big movement saying we don't think heavens for ever. If you're going to heaven for ever or hell for ever they seem to be a long time and they seem to be the same. To deny hell is unconconsonable? some people say you don't just want to have a scare tactic. If it works I'll take it.

You can't make people feel bad, they are bad so they should feel bad about that, then they should repent so bad things don't happen to them. This argument against hell is brought up by guys like Brian McLearn who I know and traveled with and spoke with and had him in my home and personally I love him. But there's this exceeding passivism that comes out of this hippy Galilean peasant who gets beat up and that's as big as our Jesus could be. So to be a faithful Christian your very effeminate and get beat up and that's faithful Christianity.

The result is that God would never send anyone to hell and Jesus would never have anything to do with it. It's leaked into guys like Chuck Smith Jr who on the front [page of the L A Times](#) says that his father (Chuck Smith Snr?) has removed him from the Calvary movement of Churches; Church Smith Snr has. In part because he no longer holds an orthodox view of hell. That it's all metaphor, folk law and imagery, that it's not literal, conscious torment.

I tell you everyone believes in hell, if you pay attention to advertisers or marketers they have ripped us off. What they do is sell someone a concept of hell. If your fat, there's fat hell right, if your poor there's poor hell, if your unemployed there's unemployment hell, if your single there's single hell, if your not sexually active there's sex hell.

Then they give you a savior to get you out of your hell. Take this diet plan, log on to this website, take this medication, and go to this seminar. Everyone is running around trying to get out of their self appointed hell, through their functional false savior.

Now the church is saying we don't want to talk about hell. That's all anyone is talking about; every marketer and advertiser is telling you there's a hell and there's a savior other than Jesus and your life can be glorious and good. That's the world we live in; everyone's talking about hell and saviors. It's just pills and products and experiences and new clothes and cars and consumerism and self esteem. So we can't lose the doctrine of hell.

Lastly we must contend that Kingdom is in priority over culture.

Culture is important because that's where lost people are so we want to go there and bring them the love of Jesus. But kingdom is more important than culture and what we are seeing is an over realized eschatology. If you listen to those who focus on an incarnational Jesus at the expense of the exaltation of Jesus they are speaking about nothing but kingdom. And it and gospel are almost inseparable and has very little to do with the death, burial resurrection of Jesus. As they hold this over realized eschatology they say lets not talk about heaven and hell because it's about now, because of the postmodern addiction with the present.

The result is there is now a movement, and you will see it gaining steam claiming that passages talking about the end of the age and eternal things; meaning the end of the Jewish era not the end of human history and we are now living in the kingdom. This is an over realized eschatology where this is the kingdom and we come together in community and we love one another, do good deeds and we make the kingdom of God on the earth. This is the same problem the Corinthian Church had with their over realized eschatology. So that in the early chapters of Corthinians Paul focuses whole heartedly on the cross because they missed it, just like many today. Then in chapter fifteen he has the lengthy treatise on the resurrection, because they didn't want to talk about eternity, the resurrected state, heaven and hell because they had an over realized eschatology thinking they where already in the kingdom.

What did the Corinthian church get into as a result of missing the cross and the eternal

resurrected state and an over realized eschatology? Homosexuality, sexual perversion, pagan syncretism. Does that sound familiar? Emergent, emerging incarnational Christians are Corinthian with an over realized eschatology, not focusing on the eternal resurrected state but believing that the kingdom is fully present here today and falling into the same sinful patterns as the Corinthians.

But they are largely over reacting to the under realized eschatology of a previous generation of dispensational eschatology where the kingdom isn't here at all and it won't be till the king comes back. So we just sit around, read books and hope for the rapture so we can get off of this trailer park so we can move on up to something better. That's my short hand for dispensational eschatology. You hear the theme songs for the Jefferson's and "you're just moving on up" and then you get to go to the kingdom.

The problem is we don't think for a thousand generations, we don't build churches and ministries because there is this immanent expectation of the rapture and we are not thinking long term. That's the same problem that happened at the church of Thessalonica. They heard that Jesus was coming back; they sold all their stuff and just sat around on the lawn listening to FM Radio hoping to see Jesus fifteen twenty minutes from now. Between this under realized?? eschatology of the Corinthians and this over realized eschatology of the Thessalonica's, Paul has a tension of already and not yet. The kingdom was inaugurated through the death burial and resurrection of Jesus but it won't be fully consummated until we see the king.

I'll be a little honest I'm getting a little sick of talking about the kingdom when we are not saying much about the king. You know where the kingdom is? It's where the reign of the king is. You know what's more important? Having the right king, that's Jesus high and seated on a throne and exalted. His reign breaks in through the preaching of the gospel and there is an already not yet tension that those who hold an under or over realized eschatology miss.

My first point is that we must contend for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as taught by scripture.

We must contextualize the message of Christ

I'm assuming that most of you are with me, and that many of you believe in the exaltation and incarnation of Jesus. This is perhaps where we have the proverbial fork in the road. You believe that we must "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints." But once we have sound doctrine we show use it. We must then contextualize it, communicate it to various people groups, cultures and subcultures, so they can come to know Jesus as Lord God Savior and King. First Corinthians nine twenty three speaks of this; "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." So in the incarnation of Jesus we see Him as a missionary.

Jesus Christ does not come as a general human being; He comes at a time, speaks a language, participates in certain holidays and takes certain foods, customs, wears certain clothes and incarnates into a culture. We must use incarnational Christology as our example in looking at cultural so we can be missionaries. In John's gospel which is the gospel of sending and missiology, Jesus said "As the Father sends me so I send you." (verse) which is a missionary command from the Lord Jesus.

If we look at how Jesus did His mission then our missionary work will constantly contextualize. We are speaking English not the languages of the Bible, we are using music, and we are using media. We flew here in airplanes, we are wearing clothing, we are eating food that is all culturally contextualized and we do all this all the time. We have no problem seeing that kind of missional movement go overseas; so someone goes to China and they learn the language and eat the food and wear the clothes and they assimilate into the culture to be a good missionary to bring the love of Jesus contextualized to the Chinese people. In addition we also believe that missions should go on around the world but also across the street. I do believe in foreign missions, we do fund it and

do Church planting around the world,

In this the church must do more than evangelism, it must be missionary in its orientation. Because we have tribes, nations, cultures so what does a missionary look like to an urban hip-hop group in Philly where a buddy of mine is planting a Church? What does it look like to an Indi subculture in Seattle where I am at? What does a faithful incarnation of contended for doctrine look like practically where people gather in culture which is different than the sending culture? What should be kept, what is to be rejected? When the gospel goes from one culture to another culture all these issues about what is biblical, what is cultural must be asked. In the New Testament this is why we have the epistles.

So in Galatians they are trying to sort out how much of Judaism do they need because it was cultural and how much was biblical? The same thing in Corinthians, how much of Corinthian culture can be assimilated into the Church and how much is pagan and worldly and to be rejected. This is the debate today for the Church...

In addition to contending we must also be contextualizing. and I will take you to First Corinthians nine and Paul says it this way, "To the Jews I became a Jew, to win the Jews, to those under the law I became under the law though not myself being under the law. That I might win those under the law that I might win those outside the law that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I would like you all to hear this." I have become what? "All."

I know some of you Calvinist know all doesn't mean all. It does here. "I have become all things to which people? All people, do you love all people? Do you love homosexuals? Just a question. That by what means guy said it the rest are resistant I might says. That as many cultures and subcultures would meet Jesus. I do it all for the sake of the what? The elect. Do you care about the gospel? Do you really care about the gospel? Do you really care about the gospel?

Then you'll contextualize want you? You want just contend for sound doctrine once you have it you'll contextualize it so that by all means as many people, cultures, subcultures as possible would meet Jesus. Those who over emphasis contextualizing all things to all people are good at contextualization. Oops we forgot the gospel. Those who tend to be more of the reformed stream, we have the gospel and it's a glorious life under an enormous bushel. That is our sin to be repented of, I say we because that is my team. Some of you are now wondering is this dangerous? It may require faith.

I would submit to you two hands. In one had is timeless truth. Do I believe in it? Yes I believe that God does not change the truth that would not be the truth. God is the same yesterday, to day and forever." In John's gospel more than fifty times the truth is spoke of by Jesus who says, "I tell you what? The truth, I believe in the truth, some don't.

But Rob Bell in his book the velvet Elvis says, "The Bible is not first and foremost timeless truths. Really, so we can rape somebody? Because that was just for them? We can be mean to somebody? Racists, sexist, oh not that. We do believe that the Bible was timeless truth. Some of it was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus so we don't have to offer goats anymore and we don't have to offer sacrifices lambs because Jesus Christ has offered himself and that's settled.

So I believe in timeless truth in the closed hand of non-negotiation, contending, fighting for sound doctrine and the open hand of flexible, nice and winsome, creative contextualization timely ministry. Those of you who are liberals, everything is in this hand, those of you who are fundamentalist everything goes in this hand. Those of you who are good missionaries you have two hands; timeless truth and timely ministry. You're anchored to the truth so you can be creative but without being anchored to the truth you drift into heresy.

Some of you will be asking what does this mean?

I am I arguing for relativism? No. I'm arguing rather to be relevant but you say, "Where is this in the Bible? How many gospels do we have? Four because one is communicating what is most relevant to Jews, Romans, Gentiles and to Greeks. The same story, of the death burial and resurrection, the same Jesus contextualized the way that is relevant for most people groups. The way the gospels are put together in the Bible is not for relativism but to relevant? One of the things I like about Dr Pipers new book is he is showing all the gospels are saying the same thing they are just saying them in slightly nuanced ways.

But some will ask are you arguing for seeker sensitive, the nasty S word? No but that you be seeker sensible. First Corinthians fourteen, unbeliever walks in, they need to understand what we are talking about. If you get up and say, "Now the vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory..." right, the dude does not doesn't know what your talking about because he's an outsider and can't be convicted of his sin and the thoughts of his heart can't be laid bear, and can't exclaim, "God is among you..." (Verse) He can't fall down on his knees and come to salvation with Jesus because he doesn't know what language we are using.

If I might stretch the context; sometimes the foreign tongue that we speak is Latin and Greek and theological nomenclature?. Am I against using theological nomenclature? No, I'm just saying explain it to the person who doesn't have any clue what you are talking about. So you don't lose the word propitiation, you just explain it. You don't loss the word expiation or vicarious substitutionary atonement, you just explain the words in a way that they understand what you're talking about.

Again, I did a series on the cross last year and we grew by something like a thousand in a couple of weeks it was amazing, it took an hour and a half, just explaining some aspects of the cross. Sometimes you're just going to need to take your time, slow down and explain the deep truths of scripture. So I'm arguing that we should by all means do all we can to reach as many as we can.

Some of you will ask where is this in the Bible? I'll give you one example that I think is funny but you probably want. Paul is out on a missionary journey and he has two great young guys he often takes with him, Timothy and Titus. They are going to various people groups and the question arises should they be circumcised? I know all you guys want to talk about this so did they both get circumcised? No they drew straws and Timothy lost and he wet bitterly and Titus made fun of him. Timothy was going to people who really cared about circumcision so he need to get circumcised. I think its Act sixteen. Because Titus was actually going to people who didn't check apparently. I'm still not sure how that worked? So because Titus is going to people who never get circumcised does he never get circumcised? No, some people look at Paul and say is he being a relativist? No he's been relevant. Is he being seeker sensitive? No he is being seeker sensible.

I'm not saying that we change the doctrines or that we proclaim them with less certainty. I have security guards staged at the foot of the stage because I have guys literally want to come up and fight me. I know John Piper's all for martyrdom, I'm not. I wear boots and by the time a guy gets there I'm going Genesis three. I'm not talking about watering anything down but being very clear and relevant.

In first Thessalonians chapter five; "Reject that which is evil, cling to that which is good and the things you need to accept things you need to reject, things you need to redeem." For example; sexuality we can receive that it is a gift of God and it's a good thing. But are there aspects of sexuality that as a faithful Bible believing Christian we simply reject. Do we reject pornography, bestiality? bisexuality, swinging? Of coarse we do. Are there other things we can receive that are not sinful and could be adapted? Yes there are.

Then there are things that must be redeemed. So on the issue of sex we must redeem sex for our people. "The marriage bed is to be kept pure." Hebrews (**verse**) says. I'm teaching a class Tuesday night going through the Song of Solomon for some married couples. Saying, "Some of you have just rejected sex when you became a Christian and you're not sure if it's pleasing to God or a gift of God. Let's receive and redeem it as a gift of God. Homosexuality and pornography,

bestiality? bisexuality, and sexual addiction are not to govern your sexuality but scripture and the work of Jesus on the cross. These make all things good and new.

There are things in culture we must reject, those who are of the emergent stream they don't get that. There are things we must receive; there are things we must redeem use of technology being an example. But they were originally good but are marred by sin and need to be bought back into the purposes God had for them in creation.

In closing some of you will ask is this a new wave of the newest, hippest fad of doctrine? Yes my friends we are right on the cutting edge of the sixteenth century... Genevan cutting edge.

One thing many people don't know is John Calvin was not just a contender but a contextualize. We must rediscover what it means to be a true Calvinist. We do not know a lot about his missiology because the people that he trained to do missionary work were under persecution so as a safety issue a lot of records were not kept because if they were found those people would be put to death. But when persecution happened in France the population of Geneva doubled because people fled to be under the teaching of John Calvin.

In the book; "A Light for the City." which is an interesting read on the life of John Calvin the transformation of a whole city for the transformation of the whole world. He says that as people flocked to Geneva He sent them out to contend and contextualize for the gospel. To contend like the exaltation of Jesus to contextualize like the incarnation of Jesus. The result was in 1555 there were 5 underground protestant churches in France. Seven years later there were 2150 Churches. There were three million Christians in France and some of them had mega churches ranging between four and nine thousand people.

If you are a true Calvinist you are not just a contender you are a contextualize. You don't just care about your Church you care about the whole world. You care about planting Churches so that others may taste and see that the Lord is good. And you're not against mega churches as long as they are good Churches. John Calvin was not just not just a contender he was a contextualize. From five churches to two thousand one hundred and fifty Churches, from a handful of people to three million in seven years. How could that possibly happen?

The gospel is the power of God; we must contend for it and then we must contextualize it because we get too, that's Jesus gift to us. Thanks for your time.

I'll pray,

"Lord Jesus we remember your incarnation in humility, may we go into our cities, and into our world with your humility to love the marginalized the poor, weak and the outcast to serve. Lord Jesus may we come into culture to your incarnation. May your Holy Spirit teach us what to receive, what to reject and what to redeem. May we know what to put in the timeless hand of truth and what to put in the open hand of timely ministry. Jesus as we go would inflame my brothers and sisters with the confidence of your exaltation that if we were to see You today we would not see a humble marginalized Galilean peasant.

But we would see You the king of King, Lord of Lords, and High and exalted on a throne. Coming to make war against the nations to usher in the kingdom of peace for the victory of the prince of peace. I pray that we would come Lord Jesus with the truth of the gospel as you did by the power of your Spirit. May we herald the coming of the king. Lord Jesus I pray that we would contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. I pray once it has been contended for it would be contextualized so that by all means as many people as possible may be won. I pray we would not be Calvinists in doctrine only but also in deed. Not just follow the teachings of Calvin but his example who didn't just follow the teachings of Paul but his example. Who didn't just follow the teachings of Jesus but His example. We ask for this in Jesus good name, Amen"

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