

What Is Missional Christology? Bruce Ware

Dr. Bruce Ware is teaching a course on Missional Christology at the [Resurgence Training Center](#) this fall. Dr. Ware is Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Find out more at [Re-Train.org](#).



"Missional Christology" focuses on aspects of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ which are central to the mission he fulfilled, by the ordination of the Father, in the power of the Spirit. Christology is relevant to the mission of the church because we are called to express and extend the mission of Christ. His mission is now ours.

The Father's Plan

Understanding the Person and Work of Christ as missional is crucial and central to understanding Jesus and his work correctly. The mission of the Son began long before his going to the cross, or his baptism, or even his incarnation. The mission of the Son began in eternity past when the Father devised his plan by which the Son would be preeminent over the created world the Father designed, planned, and willed to create.

As the Father chose the Son to be his Agent by which creation would come into being, so the Father chose the Son to be his Agent by which re-creation also would come to pass. The Son's mission, then, was from eternity past the mission of one thing—he sought in all that he thought and felt and said and did to do the will of his Father.

Divine Empowerment

But to accomplish this mission, the Son had to take on human nature and live as one of us. While he was fully God, he also was fully man. And as man, he needed divine empowerment to obey the Father, resist temptation, and fulfill the mission the Father sent him to carry out. The Spirit's indwelling presence and power on the Son was necessary for the Son to accomplish what he did. Only as the Spirit-anointed Messiah could this Christ be our Savior.

To see the mission of the Son correctly requires that we see him in Trinitarian context. Both the Person and the Work of the Son are fully inexplicable apart from seeing the Son's relation to the Father and the Spirit. Getting the Trinity right is crucial to getting the mission of the Son right.

Christ's Mission

So, the Son was sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit—but to do what? Here we realize that the Son's mission was about regaining the lost creation through the salvation of the elect and his victory over the powers of darkness. At the core of the Son's accomplishment are the dual biblical themes of penal substitution and *Christus Victor*. His payment for sin and victory over sin constitute the basis for the fulfillment of all that the Father sent the Son to do.

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Spirit-Empowered Disciples

Amazingly, the mission of the Son does not end, though, with his efficacious death for sin or his victorious resurrection from the dead. Rather, this is where the mission of the Son moves more clearly from "singular" to "plural." His singular sinless life and singular substitutionary death now give way to plural ministry as he now completes his mission with, and only with, the joint-work of his followers. Jesus' last words to his disciples instruct them to wait in Jerusalem for what the Father has promised. They will be granted the very same Holy Spirit invading their lives as had been indwelling and empowering Christ throughout his life and ministry. They will proclaim his message, display his character, perform his deeds, and further his mission only as they are Spirit-empowered followers of the Son.

The Great Drama

In the end, he will return to complete his mission of remaking everything such that it becomes more glorious and magnificent than it was originally. Just as the second Adam surpasses the first, the new Eden surpasses the original. Christ will take his rightful place as Supreme Victor over all, and we, his saved followers and friends, will reign with him forever and ever.

What a story this "missional Christology" is! What drama. What majesty. What glory. To see the mission of the Son as his-mission-become-ours should result in stirring within us the longing to do as Christ did. As his mission was the mission of one thing—to do the will of his Father in the power of the Spirit—so ours likewise should be the mission of one thing—to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, doing all we do in obedience to him, to the praise and glory of the Father.