

Introduction to the Doctrine of Christ

INTRODUCTION

"Christianity by its very name has always honored Jesus Christ as its historical and theological center. No other person has been more essential to its origination and subsequent history and no set of doctrines has been more determinative than the doctrines of the person and work of Christ. In approaching a study of Christology, one is therefore concerned with central rather than peripheral theological matters. One's faith in and understanding of Jesus Christ involve the most important theological issues anyone can face." [John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 11]

An unbelievable number of books, studies, journal articles, internet material, sermons, and class notes have been written over the 2,000 year history of the church and doubtless much more material will be published in the future.

Men and women have endured suffering and some have even given their lives to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the world. Unfortunately at the same time many false teachers have attempted to disparage and re-define the Gospel, the person, and the work of Christ to fit their own desires.

The basic question being answered as we study the Doctrine of Christ is "Who is Jesus Christ?" **No more vital question** has ever been asked than, "Who is Jesus Christ?" "What do you think about the Christ? (Matthew 22:42)" "Who do people say that the Son of Man is? (Matthew 16:13)"

GOALS of this Class

1. To answer the question "Who is Jesus Christ?"
2. To come to a complete understanding of the Biblical teaching regarding the doctrine of Christ.
3. To understand the Biblical teaching regarding the person and work of Christ.
4. To understand the various aspects of Christology including the pre-existence; deity; humanity; and incarnation of Christ.
5. To identify the various Old Testament prophecies regarding Christ.
6. To understand the life and ministry of our Lord upon this earth including His death, resurrection and ascension.
7. To express a full understanding of the doctrine of two natures in the one person, Jesus Christ (the hypo-static union) and the complexities involved with this unity.
8. To understand the significance of the virgin birth, sinlessness and atonement of Christ.
9. To be able to recognize and refute the various heresies associated with the doctrine of Christ.

DEFINITION of Christology

The term "Christology" comes from the Greek terms CHRISTOS meaning "anointed one" or "Christ" and LOGOS meaning "a word." It refers to a study of Christ. It often includes such topics as the pre-existence and eternality of Christ, Old Testament prophecies about Christ, Christ's humanity, deity, and incarnation, as well as the issue of his temptation and sinlessness, his death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation and return.

"Christology is the theological study devoted to answering two main questions: Who is Jesus? (The question of His identity) and What is the nature and significance of what Jesus accomplished in the incarnation? (The question of His work)." [Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki & Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, pp. 25]

OVERVIEW of the Doctrine of Christ

1. The Basic Question Being Asked - *Who is Jesus Christ?*

This is truly a simple question that has a complex answer. Not all men can answer so directly or with the incisive clarity of the Apostle Peter in Matthew 16:16, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!*"

Many answers have been given in response to the question, Who is Jesus?

- A devout Jew in dispute with other Jews.
- A Christian alternative to the Hellenistic savior-gods.
- A natural son of shameful paternity turned into glory.
- A Semite sharing his people's apocalyptic hopes.
- A contemplative sage offering words of wisdom.
- A prophet of New Age consciousness.
- The perfect embodiment of divine love.
- So venerated that followers could not accept his death.
- A political Christ, the prophet of social revolution.
- A semantic symbol of whatever satisfies craving for a fuller life.

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2. The Detailed Answer to the Question - *Who is Jesus Christ?*

The massive amount of data on Christ from the Scriptures alone is sufficient to answer this question. As we will examine over the next few weeks, the answer to this question covers the following areas:

- His eternal pre-existence -- John 1:1 - *In the beginning was the Word*
- His deity -- John 1:1 - *And the Word was God*
- His humanity -- 1 Timothy 2:5 - *The man Christ Jesus*
- His incarnation -- John 1:14 - *The Word was made flesh*
- His virgin birth -- Matthew 1:20 - *Conceived ...of the Holy Spirit*
- His being Messiah -- John 1:41 - *We have found the Messiah*
- His person -- Colossians 2:2 - *The Mystery of God, even Christ*
- His character -- Hebrews 4:15 - *Yet without sin*
- His teaching -- John 7:46 - *Never man so spoke*
- His works -- John 10:25 - *The works that I do*
- His ministry -- Matthew 20:28 - *The Son of Man came ...To minister*
- His death -- Romans 5:6 - *Christ died for the ungodly*
- His resurrection -- Acts 4:10 - *Whom God raised from the dead*
- His ascension -- Ephesians 4:8 - *He ascended on high*
- His return -- John 14:3 - *I will come again*