

Overview: Journey into the heart of the Christian faith: the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" And in the past two millennia, believers around the world have tackled this profound question. We will reflect upon our own portrait of Jesus. As we do so, the insights from Scripture and theology will enrich your personal portrait and edify your faith.

We will take a chronological approach to exploring Christ in our tradition. After an introduction to Christology in the first lecture, you will examine the Christologies of the New Testament. Next, you will look at how thinking about Jesus developed in the first seven centuries of the Church. This period was marked by intense reflections on Christ in the midst of theological controversies that arose in the Church. You will then approach medieval Christology, especially the thought of Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas, before taking an ecumenical turn in exploring the teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

As you move into the twentieth century, you will look at how the mystery of Christ manifests itself in the work of Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx. You will then explore the perspectives of the poor and of women, especially with regards to liberation and feminist Christologies. Finally, you will address two vital issues: the understanding of Jesus within an evolutionary view of the universe and the affirmation of Christ as universal Savior in a world characterized by religious pluralism.

In exploring different perspectives, you will respond to Jesus' question in ways that are informed by the wisdom of the Christian community throughout the centuries. You will also craft a response that is eminently personal - perhaps the most personal response believers are called to give in their lives.

Lecture 1. Introduction: Overview of Christology - Christology is the formal study of the theology of Jesus, the Christ. This first lecture seeks to flesh out that definition of Christology and elaborate its centrality and importance within the Christian tradition. This lecture also serves as a "road map" of sorts for the remainder of the program, outlining what topics we will peruse together.

I. Introductory Reflections: In Mark 8:27-29 Jesus asks two important questions: "Who do people say that I am?" "Who do you say that I am?" These are two simple, yet profoundly important questions for all Christians to reflect upon:

Who do people say that I am? We belong to a community and a tradition in which we are ever becoming more acquainted with what "people" have said about Jesus through the ages. The interpretation of the identity and significance of Jesus has a history that began with Jesus' first followers, and continues to this day.

Who do you say that I am? Each of us is called to articulate an answer to that question. Our personal portraits of Jesus - see Brian McDermott, S.J., *Word Become Flesh* 27 - are constituted of a mosaic of passages and scenes from the gospels, things said or written down about Christ by others, personal experiences through which we feel that we have encountered Christ, and our ideas about what it would be like to be an authentic human being and the Son of God. Our response to Jesus' question needs to be both informed and personal,

II. Outline of the Course: It will be helpful to lay out a "road map" for the direction this course is taking: Lecture 1 - Introduction
Lectures 2 & 3 - Exploration of the Christologies of the New Testament (Paul and the Synoptic Gospels)
Lectures 4 & 5 - Johannine Christology and Christological developments in the early Church
Lecture 6 - Medieval Christology (Anselm and Thomas Aquinas)
Lectures 7 & 8 - The Christologies of Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx
Lecture 9 - Liberationist Christology (Gustavo Gutierrez)
Lecture 10 - Feminist Christology (Elizabeth Johnson)
Lecture 11 - Christ and the Cosmos (Christology within an evolutionary view of the world)
Lecture 12 - Jesus Christ as Universal Savior (Christ and other religious traditions)

III. A Working Definition of Christology: "Christology is a historical and systematic study of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the object and foundation of the Christian faith." - John P. Galvin, "Jesus Christ," in *Systematic*

Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives, 255-314.

A Study: When we love someone we want to know more about them - see Donald Senior's *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* (Paulist Press, 1992).

Historical: Christology concerns a person of human history. The "scandal of particularity" - tendencies in history to disconnect the idea of "Christ" from the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Attention to the Christological tradition

Systematic: Christian teaching about Jesus Christ is meant to have a certain coherence. Christology is related to other areas of doctrine and theology: The Trinity, The Church, The sacraments, Christian spirituality, Ethics, Final fulfillment (e.g., the connection between belief in the resurrection of Jesus and ecological responsibility)

The Person and Saving Work of Jesus Christ: The importance of holding these two dimensions of Christology together: Soteriology (derived from *soteria*) is the study of the saving work of Christ - "Something exceedingly good happens to people in their encounter with Jesus Christ. Fundamentally they are put right with God. . . Given the profound impact of Jesus Christ on their lives the question naturally arises - who is he?" - Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 4.

IV. Jesus Christ as the Object and Foundation of the Christian Faith

Object: Christians profess to believe in Christ and in the redemption effected by him. Faith: as both intellectual assent and personal commitment. Foundation: the destiny of Jesus is the basis for our faith and the foundation for our hope in God. The Sources for the study of Christology: Scriptures, Doctrines, The works of classical and contemporary theologians, The liturgy of the Church, Writings of holy men and women, Music, Visual art

Reflection Questions

1. What does your personal portrait of Jesus Christ look like?
2. Which Scripture passages, scenes, or stories speak to you most vividly about the person and saving work of Christ?
3. Which titles, names, or phrases do you use to refer to Christ?
4. Who are the people who have taught you about Jesus Christ? What did you learn from them?