

Defining Christ, Part One

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These are dynamic days in which we are living. Many believers are turning a corner in their spiritual perspectives, and there is definitely a move abroad toward, at least in some measure, a more kingdom orientation in the understanding of the gospel and the church's mandate. That, undoubtedly being so, as one might expect, there are those, like the judaizers of old, who refuse to budge from their officially-sanctioned religious paradigm, and on the other end of the spectrum, are those who are, as it were, floating off into New Age/Gnostic space while all the while thinking that they are the ones who represent the cutting-edge of what God is saying in the earth in this day.

Though I ought not to have to say it, nevertheless I will; this is all about Christ. Better still, it's Him in action making Himself known, at different levels, but the net effect is that we are in the early stages of a spiritual renewal, reconstitution, restructuring, and reformation that eventually will go beyond that of even the day of Pentecost. And, hear me, dear brethren, what is happening is not, and will not be contained within our little fellowship cliques, or fully expressed in our provincially-minded conferences. It's just too, too, big.

Appropriately, as has always been true, and certainly was true in the earliest days of the emergence of the new covenant community in the earth, an apostolic defining of Christ is an absolute necessity as integral to a saving and glorifying knowledge of our heavenly Father in union with His Son, our Lord.

While most essentially, such knowledge is that of beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, so that we cannot deny that quality of spiritual experience which is deeply inward, subjective, even mystical, still, an objective defining of Christ must accompany, finally, and give form, finally, to the vitality of experiencing Christ corporately and personally. In a word, when the process of revelation proceeding to understanding breaks down, and we end up, not with godly understanding, but fluff that passes for weightiness, something's askew.

Allow me to go to an extreme to make my point. Suppose someone claiming brotherhood in the faith of Christ, is found going about teaching that he has experienced a Christophany by which he met the Lord face to face, and must, accordingly give the honest report that He is short, with green skin, a very large head, large slanted eyes and long, thin limbs. Though that person might speak in very glowing terms of loving Christ and communing with Him in the secret place of their spirit, we would have to say that something doesn't quite add up as to their objective description of their Lord.

I know that many people have come into a saving knowledge of Christ with little, if any, solid foundation of defining His Person, yet given time and exposure to the testimony of scripture and that of larger community of faith, that person will come to the place of being able to confess Him with some degree of intelligent definition.

I once baptized the ex-wife of a Hollywood celebrity who had met Christ while meeting with us in our little house church, and who, obvious to all in our fellowship, was salvifically responsive to the Spirit of Christ. She knew the Lord. Of that there was no doubt. There was about her, His sweet aroma, yet, when I called for her confession of faith while in the baptismal waters, all that she could honestly confess to knowing was that He was love.

The rest of what we would deem to be even an elementary creedal testimony, she did not yet understand. The Spirit whispered to me in words to the effect, "Go ahead, baptize her, the rest will follow in good order."

So, while breathing a prayer that the Spirit will keep me from becoming a steely-eyed, doctrine-obsessed definer of orthodoxy (shudder), I will proceed to present what I believe belongs to that objective, definitive outline of Christ that is unique to our apostolic faith. Who and what is Christ?

What is the relationship of the One called Jesus to the Christ? Does Christ in some way transcend Jesus of Nazareth? Is the earthen persona of Jesus intrinsically and utterly consistent with Christ. Does the Man of Galilee enjoy a first and all-inclusive indissoluble union with Deity from eternity and in time? What is the nature of the

oneness of Jesus and the Father? What, in fact, is the nature of oneness per se from a truly Christian perspective? The above, are representative questions that the following treatise will, I trust, at least touch upon.

First, a most fundamental fact: "Christ" is a title; "Jesus" is a name. The word, "Christ," means anointed, or anointed one. It does not; I repeat, it does not mean anointing. One is anointed, or an anointed one, because he or she has been anointed. The confession of Peter, clear, forceful, confident, enthusiastically commended by Jesus, gives expression to the cornerstone of the Jesus' church.

Responding to Jesus' question as to who men thought He was, and who His disciples thought He was, Peter exclaims, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus commends Peter as blessed and traces the big fisherman's testimony to revelation from the Father. Peter, clearly, is addressing Jesus of Nazareth when He says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

So the right conclusion ought to come easily to us unless we are subject to some strong delusion. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is very singularly the Christ, and very singularly the Son of God. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of God is Jesus, Jesus is the Christ, the Christ is Jesus.

In John's words, He is the only begotten, or uniquely begotten Son. John, in His first epistle makes it clear that the anointing that we all have from the Father, we have, because we have the Son. "He that hath the Son, hath life." The anointing belongs singularly to the life of the Son, making Him singularly The Anointed, and by having Him, we have His anointing.

No one other person is the Christ, only Jesus. But, together, as members of His body, we are the enlargement of Christ; we are the greater Christ of the economy of God, but only in that God has multiplied His Son, Jesus, in many as one body. The life of the corporate Christ is the life of Jesus, the Christ, multiplied and enlarged in many.

I have actually had someone insist that they (individually) could scripturally say that they are Christ, based upon the fact that they had

an anointing from the Father. To back that up, they had to invent the idea that Christ means anointING, instead of anointED, and since they possessed anointing, they could say, "I am Christ." Such stubborn, unyielding independence of mentality will finally cause a breakdown of intelligence. Losing touch with reality, ends up in irrationality.

My question to that person is, "Am I complete in you?" Is it you that indwells me? Was it you who died and rose from the dead as the reconciliation and salvation of all men? Are you the Head of the body? Are you the One in whom all things shall finally be gathered together? Such ignorance parading about as super-revelation. There is such a need for clear teaching on the relationship of Christ, singular, and Christ, multiplied as the many who are one body.

What we, each of us, have, we have in Christ. He is greater than any one of us, for He is the summation of Deity and the totality of Humanity. Our Father, by His Seed, has given nothing less than the fulness of Himself to His Son. That is the anointing; the fulness of Deity in the Son, shared freely with us all. It belongs first to the Son, through whom we receive that same anointing. The nature of God is in His Seed, and that constitutes the anointing of Christ. "Jesus said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me...." That Spirit, though portrayed as a dove outwardly, came from within Him. Biblical principle: All that comes upon, comes from within.

That is what makes the Son the Anointed One. The nature of His Father, arising out of the depths of what the Father has made the Son to be, comes upon the Son out of the depths of His God-nature, by the Holy Spirit. The anointing is Godness itself clothing the Son from within. Certainly we all, as sons of God, have an anointing from the Father, but only in that we have been given the Son in whom all fulness dwells.

We are sons in the Son. It is the Son in the sons that makes the sons sons. Only One individual Person can rightfully claim to be Christ, the Son of the living God. That is Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, buried, risen and glorified. We owe our sonship to the extension of the Seed of God through Him. We might even dare to speak of the corporate Son, but,

to repeat, only as the unfolding of the totality of sonship as it is found in the glorified Jesus of Nazareth.

The biblical procession of personhood out from Being proceeds as the One Seed of God reproduces Deity as the Son. Having a Son, made God a Father. Have you considered that? Deity begins as Being, and proceeds to familial Personhood. God didn't begin as Father, He became the Father by begetting His Son. They are equally eternal, for this is not on a time-line, it is timeless.

God, the Ground of all Being, became a Father and a Son by divine, eternal impregnation, conception and birth. The One Seed of God in the Son is multiplied into many seeds, and the Son as the heavenly bridegroom, with His bride, the church, begets many.

That's why the Son speaks to God about "Thou and the children Thou hast given me." As Levi was in the loins of Abraham, though many generations removed, so we were in the loins of our Father from eternity, but in His loins within the One Seed that became many seeds. I declare to you a mystery. From the family potential of Deity, God became a family, the family of God. All proceeded, not on a time-line, but eternally, out from the intrinsically relational Being of God. God is Relational in a family way. God is Perfect Relational Being, who unfolds in Family-defined Personhood.

Grand, majestic, thrilling, consistent, repeated, and bearing much fruit has been the truth heralded over the centuries: Possessing Christ, we possess all things in Him. Our Father does not have merely someTHING called the anointing to give us. He has given us His Son, and in giving us His Son, He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

His anointing, given without measure to His corporate body, is enjoyed in a measure by each member of that body. Yet, many of us act as if the whole of the anointing rests on us individually, and that it is not possible that we might, in some measure, be mistaking what is really our insecure need for revelation one-upmanship for the anointing.

"Father told me this or that," so it's settled. No need to check out the accuracy of one's understanding of the anointing. Look at the

experience of Peter who, in spite of His great revelation, needed much adjustment and correction before his revelation flowered into true apostolic understanding.

We get some notion that strikes us as super-understanding, and off we go creating a doctrinal house of cards that will crumble at the first touch of investigation. We mistake vain imagination for the renewing of our minds, thinking that we are immune from that syndrome.

(To Be Continued)

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