

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #119: “THE SEVEN CHRISTS”

By John Temples

(Note: When I was enrolled in the Nashville School of Preaching back in the Dark Ages (1968-70), one of my favorite teachers was brother Basil Overton. I want to give him full credit for the main points presented in this article, which made an indelible impression on me then and still do.)

The Bible is all about Jesus Christ. The basic message of the Old Testament is “Christ is coming.” The theme of the New Testament is “Christ has come and will come again.” There are many dimensions to the nature and personality of Christ. He is the unique God/man. He is the only Man ever to have lived a perfect, blameless life. He is like a diamond with many facets. Let us ponder some of those facets under the heading “The Seven Christs.” (Of course, there is only one Christ; but seven different manifestations or dimensions of His nature.) Here are the “seven Christs” we will talk about:

- The Christ of the Cosmos
- The Christ of the Creation
- The Christ of the Cradle
- The Christ of the Cross
- The Christ of the Crown
- The Christ of the Commission
- The Christ of the Consummation

THE FIRST CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE COSMOS

We’re talking here about His relationship to the vast physical universe: His eternity, His self-existence, and His Godhood or Godhead. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We know from verse 14 that “the Word” is Christ. As the Word, Christ is and has always been the expression of God’s will.

John says the Word was “in the beginning.” This is a reference to the beginning of earth time. It does not mean that Christ came into existence at the beginning, but

rather that when time began, He was already there. No one created Christ; He always was. So this passage, and many others, affirm Christ's eternal nature and self-existence. Jesus at one time entered into His creation and dwelt among us for a time; but He transcends this universe. He is outside of it, independent of it, and superior to it. From everlasting to everlasting, He is God!

THE SECOND CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE CREATION

Go back to John 1 again. Verse 3 says of Christ, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Paul affirmed the same in Colossians 2:16--"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

Even though not named in the Genesis account of the creation, Christ--The Word--was active in it. Genesis 1:1-2 declares that the physical universe was created, but not yet organized and structured. Verse 3 says, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." "God SAID...." That's the Word!

Not only did Jesus create this physical universe, He sustains it. "He upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). Colossians 1:17 tells us, "In Him all things hold together" (ESV). Jesus created Earth; He sustains Earth; and He will one day destroy Earth. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). This world began with Christ, and will end with Christ.

THE THIRD CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE CRADLE

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). There's a beautiful sense in the Greek of this verse--Christ "pitched His tent" with us. The transcendent, eternal God entered into and became a part of His creation. Why did He come as a small, helpless infant? One reason was to assure us that He was truly and completely human, to completely identify with us. From various passages in Revelation, it seems that He still retains part of His humanity. When He became one with us, it was forever. Such great love!

THE FOURTH CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS

His coming in the cradle began His journey to the cross. This is the mystery of redemption: We were dead in sin and could not redeem ourselves; so Christ did it for us. “We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:6-11).

THE FIFTH CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE CROWN

This has reference to His resurrection, ascension, and coronation in heaven. Hebrews 10:12 proclaims, “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” Paul wrote: “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:8-11). Psalms 24:7 may be an allusion to the triumphant return of Christ to heaven: “Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.” Many people think that Jesus has not established His kingdom or begun to rule yet; but Scripture affirms that He is NOW King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14).

THE SIXTH CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE COMMISSION

Before our Lord ascended back to heaven, He commissioned His apostles to preach the gospel throughout the world. Matthew 28:18-20 reads, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven

and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Note from this passage that each generation of Christians is responsible for carrying on the charge given to the apostles, to take the word of Christ to others. Christ in heaven promises to be with us when we do that. He is "the Christ of the Commission."

THE SEVENTH CHRIST: THE CHRIST OF THE CONSUMMATION

"Consummation" means completing or bringing to an end. Here we are dealing with the Lord's second coming. Some of the clearest passages of Scripture affirm His return and subsequent termination of the physical universe:

- "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:9-11).
- "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Revelation 1:7).
- "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).
- "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

As we get closer to the end of all things, this aspect of Christ's nature ought to have more and more meaning for us. As we noted before, this world began with Christ, and will end with Him.

CONCLUSION

So here we have the "seven Christs":

- The Christ of the Cosmos--the transcendent, eternal Christ.
- The Christ of the Creation--the Word of God who spoke the universe into existence.
- The Christ of the Cradle--the Christ who left His home in heaven and "pitched His tent" with us.
- The Christ of the Cross--the God who died for us.
- The Christ of the Crown--the ascendant, conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- The Christ of the Commission--the Christ who sends His people out to reach the lost.
- The Christ of the Consummation--the Christ who will bring this world to an end, who will right all wrongs and punish all evil.

Which of these "seven Christs" has the most meaning to you? Different people, both believers and non-believers, focus on different facets of His nature. Some see Him primarily as the Christ of the cosmos or the creation (they have a vague idea that He is up there somewhere, but not really involved in our lives). Others prefer to think of Him as the Christ of the cradle, especially at "Christmas" time. They don't like the idea of Christ as Lord and Judge--they want to keep Him relegated to "harmless, innocent little baby" status. Still others think of Him only as the Christ of the cross (a dead Christ). But to faithful Christians, ALL these aspects of Christ's nature are important.

One day, we will all meet Christ face to face. On that day, He will be to each of us either the Christ of comfort or the Christ of condemnation. The choice is ours to make now. --John Temples