

## Teaching for 1-16-08

### A Crisis in the Church

Our world seems to reel from one crisis to another. Military threats, political instability, and economic upheaval are the watchwords of our day. Yet these do not represent the most deadly crisis that faces our world. There is another crisis that is largely ignored—and it is hitting the heart of the Church. The most critical crisis of the day is how those inside the Church view the Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the attacks of 9-11, there was a marked rise in interest in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Church attendance rose—in some cases as much as 50 percent. Yet just a year later, the impact on the spiritual condition of America was negligible. Research revealed that church attendance actually declined to levels lower than before September 11. In one survey, more than half the citizens concluded that the message of Christ was decreasing despite the reality of 9-11.

This “Crisis of Christology” has become a significant threat looming in the Church today, which in turn has an impact on all of society. Many Christian leaders are joining their voices in sounding the alarm that the Church and our nation are in desperate need of a true Christ-awakening in this crucial hour.

Pastor John Piper is quoted as saying: *Since September 11, 2001 I have seen more clearly than ever how essential it is to exalt explicitly in the excellence of Christ crucified for sinners and risen from the dead. **Christ must be explicit in all our God-talk.** It will not do, in this day of pluralism, to talk about the glory of God in vague ways. God without Christ is no God. God-in-Christ is the only true God and the only path to joy. If we would see and savor the glory of God, we must see and savor Christ (Christ Is ALL, by David Bryant, pg. 186).*

#### The Unknown Christ

As the Church grows busy with vision for growth and implementing programs, Jesus Christ can easily become a mere mascot that gets held up from time to time. This underestimating of Jesus’ magnificence and glory fuels the crisis of Christology in our nation.

Dr. Stephen Prothero states: *...The American Jesus is more a pawn than a king, pushed around in a complex game of cultural (and countercultural) chess, sacrificed here for this cause and there for another (Christ Is ALL, pg. 5).*

The American Church knows little of the Christ before whom John the Apostle fell to his face as though dead in Revelation chapter 1:13-17: *in the midst of the seven lampstands was One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.*

John was the disciple who walked the closest to the Lord Jesus when He was here on the earth.

He knew Jesus in a personal and intimate way. Yet when he saw the exalted Christ in all His supremacy and glory, the familiarity gave way to breathless adoration. When did you last have a vision of Christ that left you speechless and longing to know more of the reality of Jesus in His exalted supremacy?

### **A Call to Return**

Dr. David Bryant writes about both the crisis of Christology and the hope of an awakening in his book, *Christ Is ALL*:

*...from every quarter of the contemporary church Christian leaders are starting to confess it's time to restore to Christians worldwide a larger vision of our Redeemer's triumphant glory. The conviction is growing that God can and must awaken His people to Christ for ALL that He is....*

*Believers of every stripe must revisit their vision of the Victor. For the sake of Christ's global cause our number one priority must become exalting our Savior more consistently to one another as Christians. We must spread throughout our churches and ministries a message of God's Son that will explode the boundaries of our current hope in Him while, at the same time, re-ignite renewed passion for the pursuit of His Kingdom in all things, among all peoples (pg. xviii).*

There is a rising sense of anticipation for this year. The greatest challenge for us all in this New Year will be our response to this call to the Supremacy of Jesus Christ. That is why Prayer Transformation Ministries wrote the *2008 Transformation Prayer Guide* on the theme, *Come, Lord Jesus*, pointing to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is why we have invited David Bryant to the Twin Cities for a ***Christ Summit, February 22-23, 2008***. This Summit will guide each one of us as we face the greatest crisis in the Church this hour. David Bryant will explore how to confront this ***Crisis of Christology***—and what that means in terms of reaching more people with the glorious, hope-filled message of our Redeemer. You'll get a larger vision of God's Son for your own life, too! (For a brochure on the conference, [click here](#).)

Let's face it. We can have all the activity, programs, and busyness that we want, but if we have lost our vision of the Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Supreme One of all creation, then we will be exactly like those described by Isaiah 29:13: And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote (NLT).

Perhaps this prayer from Tricia Rhodes (*Christ Is ALL*, pg. 187) will mirror your heart as well:

***Jesus, King of Kings, I am yearning for the day your kingdom comes in power, for even momentary impressions of your dominion leave me breathless. My mouth cannot keep silent—I must tell of your mighty acts and make known the glory of your kingdom. We need your reign. Nothing else will do. Amen.***