

## THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, a city marked by affluence, sensuality and intellectualism.

*'I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, I promised you to one husband to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ, for if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.'* - 2 Cor. 11:2-4 NIV

As you read the word Christ in the title, I assume you know that I am referring to Jesus Christ. The New Testament letters often use the word Christ, but they also refer to Him as Jesus, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth or the Lord Jesus Christ. Such facts are of vital importance. A Christ without Jesus or Lordship is another Christ. Christ is not a name but a title for the anointed one, the promised Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus was not a Christ, but **The Christ**, the Son of the living God. - Matthew 16:16. The true Christ was born of a virgin and will always have the nail scars in his hands and feet from the nails that pierced him at the cross. Jesus prophesied that many false Christs would come in His name. - Matthew 24:5, 23-30.

I still have the full page ad that was printed in the newspapers of 17 major cities of the world in 1982. The captivating title in the paper was the following: **THE CHRIST IS NOW HERE**. It was sponsored by New Age teacher Benjamin Creme to announce the appearing in two months of the world teacher **Lord Maitreya**, known by Christians as the **Christ**, by Jews as the **Messiah**, by the Buddhists as the **fifth Buddha**, by the Moslems the **Iman Mahdi**, by the Hindus as **Krishna**. You can read the whole message if you Google: The Christ is now here 1982. If you scroll down you will see a picture of the whole page. It is worth reading, for it portrays the type of message the final antichrist in history will have. Those who sat under the influence of Benjamin Creme mentioned the almost hypnotic influence he had when he spoke. His views came from Theosophists such as Alice Bailey and Helena Blavatsky. For several decades, Cremes' predictions re: the World Teacher never came to fruition, but his ideas continue at Share-International.

The following summer of 1983, I led three different evangelism teams in three different areas of London, England. It was an unusually warm and dry summer that year. Late one afternoon in July I needed a break from the team, so I found a nearby small park and rested on the grass in the shade. Just as I had finished reading the book of 1 Timothy, I happened to notice a young Indian guy walking towards me about 150 feet away. My curiosity increased as he came up to me, stopped, and asked me

what I was reading. I told him I was reading the Bible. He then asked me if I was working on a thesis or something. I responded that I was spending time alone with God to refresh myself, as I was leading a team that told people about Jesus. After chatting a bit more, Anand invited me to bring our team to a small gathering that met in a home to discuss spiritual things.

A few nights later, our team of about ten went to a home, removed our shoes and sat on the floor covered with white sheets. We discovered that this was a small gathering of disciples of Benjamin Creme and his teachings. It was associated with the Tara Center in London. Tara is the name of a Hindu astral goddess and also of a Buddhist female deity. Our team was able to share about Jesus and afterwards there was some interaction with the small group of Creme disciples. Daniel, one of our group, mentioned that God is jealous.

*Do not worship any other God, for the LORD, whose name is **Jealous**, is a jealous God. - Exodus 34:14*

This brought a strong reaction from one young man in the group. (I have found that people from cult like groups can convey a very warm, loving, tolerant attitude until they are confronted with the truth of God's Word.) This episode reminds me of the life of Oprah Winfrey. She grew up in the Baptist faith and wrote these words in her high school yearbook.

*'There is truly only One Way, Jesus Christ.....without Him taking control .....life is just an endless go-round with no meaning.'*

She would have big dreams of being a success in the media world but had many disappointments well into her 20's. One Sunday she went to a church where the pastor was preaching how great God was in His omniscience, omnipresence and that He is a jealous God. That word 'jealous' struck her and she did not feel right in her spirit. That began her quest to take God out of a box of rules, belief systems and doctrines. She ended up in New Age Mysticism because she took her human view of jealousy and projected it upon God. God is not insecure or jealous in a negative way. He desires the best for each person. He knows the dead end trail of following false gods. They promise much and deliver little. To make a god in our own likeness, image or desires is simply idolatry.

*'The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.' - Psalm 16:4*

*'I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity. I am a free thinking Christian who believes in my way but I don't believe its the only way. Jesus did not come here to die for our sins but to show us how to live from Christ Consciousness. "*

*- Oprah in TV statements*

Oprah came to these ideas from the Unity and New Thought principles from a book by Eric Butterworth: Discover the Power Within You (1968) His teachings focused on the divinity of all people, with the desire that everyone would know their oneness with

God. There are some valid concepts in this book which are certainly true for Christians that have Christ in their life, but the author applies these to all people, regardless of their particular religion.

New Age beliefs can be very inviting due to the kindness, gentleness and seeming tolerance of its proponents like Oprah, Eckhart Tolle, Wayne Dyer, Marianne Williamson etc. The New Age is not new, it is the **old lie** from the serpent in Eden.... "you shall be as God..." Its views come more from Hinduism and Eastern religions. Oprah now uses the term New Spirituality. (Note: Jesus is the final judge of a person's heart, therefore He is the one who decides whether persons like Oprah go to heaven, but her views are not Biblical)

The church of today needs to heed the warning that Paul gave to the Christians in Corinth about being led astray from pure devotion to Christ due to affluence, sensuality and intellectualism. Our culture encourages us to put self first, God calls us back to keeping Christ at the center of our life and purposes.

I think back to that afternoon in July of 1983 when I met Anand. One verse I read from the letter of 1 Timothy, just before he approached me was this one.

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and **follow deceiving spirits** and **things taught by demons** - 1 Tim. 4:1*

A year later in 1984, I returned to the home where our team had met Anand, I was told that he was no longer there, and I wondered, had Anand turned away from the false cult and perhaps found new life in Christ? Was our first contact in the park not a chance encounter but a divine one? I pray that one day I will see Anand in heaven.

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