

Chi-Rho

Hebrews 9.15

Explanation

The most widely known Chrismon is a combination of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, *Christos*. The X which is the Greek Chi stood for Christ over a thousand years before the English language, of which the word *Christ* is a part.

The Chi Rho (XP) was widely used by the early church. In that day, the shame and pain of the cross was too immediate for most people to use the sign of the cross openly.

This is the emblem, legend says, that Constantine saw in the sky with the cross and the words, "In this sign, conquer." So, continues the story, the Roman Caesar fought the definitive battle for Rome in 312 A.D. under this sign for the Christ. It is a fact that Constantine later placed the Chi Rho atop his labarum, the standard carried before him, to signify that his was an empire under the Christ, a Christian people. He defended the church against further persecution, became a Christian himself, and abolished the cross as a form of execution because his Lord had died on it. Since then, use of this monogram has also implied the triumph of Christianity.

Another interpretation of the Chi Rho is based on the Latin phrase, *Christus Rex*, Christ the King. That leads into another of our Chrismons for today, The Crown, which we will talk about in a few minutes.

Message

In my walks to and from the Church office, I have noticed, and perhaps you have seen them too, yard signs which implore passersby to "Keep Christ in Christmas!" That exhortation could have more than one meaning, and one of them is against the tendency to replace the "Christ" in Christmas with "X" and turn it into Xmas.

I used to be more strident against replacing the Christ with "X" until I was reminded that the "X" stands for Christ and, as we have learned, is the combination of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, *Christos*, and has long been a shorthand to refer to Jesus Christ.

So, I don't think we need to be upset when we see Xmas instead of Christmas. In fact, it is an opportunity for us to tell the good news. When you see Xmas instead of Christmas, you can ask the person nearest you, "Did you know that the "X" stands for Jesus?" Whenever you see Xmas, you can remember our Chi-Rho Chrismon today and turn your heart toward Jesus and point others to Jesus as the real reason for Xmas.

The Shell

Matthew 28.19

Over the years, I've often had people come to me, usually the mother of a child or sometimes the grandmother of a child, wanting to have that child baptized. Although not part of a church, they feel that baptism is a necessary ritual for salvation.

The Bible is pretty clear and Christian tradition has fallen into line that one must be reborn to enter the kingdom of God – to be saved. Many church traditions consider baptism to be that rebirth – born of water and the Spirit. So, it makes sense that Jesus commands His disciples to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

However necessary baptism might be, it is still no guarantee of salvation. In Methodist Wesleyan tradition, it is the life lived after making a commitment to Jesus that is the most telling thing. Not that we can earn our way into salvation, but an acceptance of God's grace, given in baptism, becomes a response to God's grace and offer of salvation as believers strive to grow in faith and love and “move on to perfection in love.”

A shell is often used in baptism to pour water on the one being baptized and so is a sign that points to Jesus and points to God and is our second Christmas today. In baptism, belief is professed and a commitment is made to follow Jesus. So, the shell today points to Jesus and points to our privilege to follow Him and to tell the good news that Jesus Christ is born and “God sent us salvation” and continues to send salvation “on [each] blessed Christmas morn.”

The Crown

1 Timothy 6.15; Romans 8.34

Explanation

The crown is a symbol for the Kingship of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. As 1 Timothy 6:15 says, “For, At just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.” The crown may also inspire you to think of Jesus' victory over sin and death of the cross and His place of honor at the right hand of God.

Message

I once heard the story of a dilapidated little shop whose owner was about to go out of business. The floor was unswept, the windows unwashed, the goods in disorder, and the proprietor careless and untidy. One day the king came by, saw the wretched condition of the place, and said to the shopkeeper, "If you will do as I say, I will let you put over the door 'approved by the king.' " The proprietor gladly consented. Everything was changed; the floor was swept, the windows washed, the goods in order, and the keeper himself cleaned up.

Soon customers began to come and money rang in the cash register because of the approval of the king. Hallelujah!

Have you ever let the king take over your life?

Have we ever said: "Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today. Come in to stay. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus."