

THE VITAL QUESTION

by John F. Thornbury

“What think ye of Christ?”

—Matthew 22:42

ALL true religion has its center and focus in a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other things which we may attend to, and which in themselves are important, are nevertheless secondary to this supreme end. I greatly fear that many have missed this important and basic truth. For example, many seem to rejoice only in the blessings and benefits of Christ, and have little concern about their relation to His person. Others have a tendency to become enamored with duties and ordinances, etc., and have no genuine devotion to the One Whom these things concern.

I would be the last to belittle the place of doctrine in our Christian experience. But truth can be cold and lifeless unless it is connected to the “Truth” Himself. One may be converted to a doctrinal system which is ever so orthodox, and yet be eternally lost. Soundness in the faith is a necessary guide to vital godliness; but in itself it is powerless. The ordinances are important, but what good are forms and ceremonies if they do not lead us to the Lord?

I am firmly convinced that one of Satan’s greatest devices to blind the souls of men is religion—and I might add: Christless religion. He cares not how much of the shell and form and husk of Christianity we have, so long as we are not vitally united to the Lord of Glory. If we take the means¹ that God has given us and make them an end in themselves, we not only spoil them of their real purpose, but we also destroy our own souls. After all, if we love doctrines more than Christ, we are mere rationalists. If we love forms of ceremonies more than Christ, we are ritualists. If we love our works more than Christ, we are legalists. If we love the church more than Christ, we are sectarians. And if we love our experiences more than Christ, we are emotionalists.

The question upon which the eternal salvation of our souls hinges is not, “Are you sound?” but “What think ye of Christ?” I trust that we shall give an unprejudiced inquiry into this all-important question. Of course, the natural man sees no beauty in the person of Christ. The scales of sin have so blinded his eyes that to him “the preaching of the cross is...foolishness” (1Co 1:18). But the man who is truly converted has been given spiritual eyes so that he sees in Jesus everything that is excellent and glorious. To the believer, Christ is “altogether lovely,” the “rose of Sharon,” the “lily of the valleys,” the “bright and morning star,” and the “apple tree among the trees of the wood” (Song 5:16; 2:1; Rev 22:16; Song 2:3).

My friend, do you know this One? Is He your all in all? Have you sincerely turned from iniquity, cleaving to Him as your only hope? Are you trusting His blood and righteousness alone to save you from sin? Are you endeavoring to daily walk in a way that is pleasing to Him? If not, may the blessed Spirit, Who is the representative of the Lord Jesus on earth, turn you from your downward course and reveal Christ to your heart. ✞

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31).

“As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27).

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

“For he [God the Father] hath made him [God the Son, Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

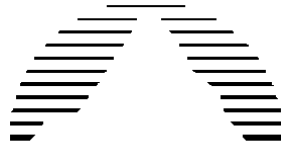
¹ **means** – something used as an instrument to achieve a purpose; in this case, as an instrument in the hands of God used for His purpose.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Joh 1:12).

© Copyright 2001 Chapel Library. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided 1) you do not charge beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication and 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page are included.

Chapel Library is a faith ministry that relies entirely upon God’s faithfulness. We therefore do not solicit donations, but we gratefully receive support from those who freely desire to give. Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal positions of the authors it publishes.

Worldwide, please download material without charge from our website, or contact the international distributor as listed there for your country. In North America, for additional copies of this booklet or other Christ-centered materials from prior centuries, please contact



CHAPEL LIBRARY

2603 W. WRIGHT ST. • PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32505 • USA

chapel@mountzion.org • www.ChapelLibrary.org

850 438-6666 • M-F 9-5 CT • fax 850 438-0227

A worldwide ministry of Mt. Zion Bible Church