

WILL THE REAL JESUS STAND UP

Matthew 16:13-18

INTRODUCTION

- A. Matthew 16:13-18
 - 1. Who do men say that I am?
 - 2. Some, John the Baptist; some Elijah, Jeremiah, other prophets.
 - 3. They didn't tell Him the bad things: in league with demons, blasphemous, gluttonous, drunkard, etc..
 - 4. Who do you say that I am?
- B. How important is it, anyway, to get Jesus right? If you gain the whole world but miss out on Jesus, just how much have you missed out on after all? If you have all knowledge and can fathom all mysteries, but you don't know Jesus Christ, how much in the dark are you?
- C. There are many who will tell you that you haven't missed out on much if you miss out on Jesus. They play fast and loose with Christology, challenging not just the orthodox position on Christ but the Bible's plain teaching. They seem to think it nothing to redefine His work, to question His nature, or to cast doubt on His teaching. "It is important that we understand God," they say. "Understanding Jesus is nice, but not essential."

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING JESUS RIGHT.

A. Christ has always been Controversial.

- 1. Modern day heresies about Jesus.
 - a. That Jesus lived a long life, married, and had children. He was killed in the end, but it wasn't what he intended to happen.
 - b. That Jesus was "a god," but refuse to confess that "Jesus is God." "In the beginning ... and the Word was a god (or was divine)". (*New World Trans.*)
 - c. And there are those who teach that Jesus can be your Savior (you can believe in Jesus and thus be saved) without also being your Lord (there is no commitment or submission to Jesus required to be saved).
- 2. Earlier heresies about Jesus.
 - a. Such teachings in our own time should not surprise us. There have always been people who have perverted the Bible's teachings about Jesus Christ.
 - b. Gnostic Doceticism in the second century; Arianism in the third and fourth.
 - c. Christological heresies have always plagued the church.

B. What You Believe about Jesus Determines Everything Else.

- 1. The Diamond cutter's art:
 - a. Finding the fracture plane.
 - b. The result: beauty or dust.
- 2. Jesus is religion's "fracture plane."
 - a. If you get Jesus right, everything else will come out right.
 - b. If you get Jesus wrong, nothing else can come out right.

II. COLOSSIANS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING JESUS RIGHT.

Someone (or some group) in the Colossian church had misunderstood the very heart and soul of the Christian message. Probably, it wasn't that they were deliberately trying to sabotage the church in Colossae. They may even have had good motives - attempting to help these Christians to know more or live better or worship more acceptably.

A. The Danger facing the Colossian Church.

1. *"You need more knowledge."*
 - a. Some would tell us that greater knowledge (depending on human tradition, etc.) is the key to spirituality. It is Christ *plus* special knowledge.
 - b. Paul insists that Christ is all we need for true spirituality, **Col. 2:8-10a**.
 - c. *When we know Christ, we know everything we need to know to know God.*
2. *"You need more ceremony."*
 - a. Some would tell us that stricter ceremonial observances are the keys to spirituality. It is Christ *plus* special religious observances.
 - b. Paul insists that the "reality is found in Christ," **Col. 2:16-17**.
 - c. *When we worship Christ, we have worshiped in spirit and in truth.*
3. *"You need more spiritual experiences."*
 - a. Some would tell us that visions and a more direct communication with the spirit world are the keys to real spirituality. It is Christ *plus* a special experience of the transcendental.
 - b. Paul insists that reliance on such things "disqualifies you for the prize," **Col. 2:18-19**.
 - c. *When we look at Christ, we have seen all that we need to see for spiritual growth.*
4. *"You need more rules and regulations."*
 - a. Some would tell us that more "Dos and Don'ts" have to be required before people can become spiritual. It is Christ *plus* a strict code of conduct.
 - b. Paul insists that such things have an "appearance of wisdom" but that knowing Jesus is the only way to restrain "sensual indulgence," **Col. 2:20-23**.
 - c. *When we have committed to following Jesus, we have the one rule that is truly able to promote holy living.*

B. Paul's Encouragement to Get Jesus Right.

According to Paul, these people were majoring in minors and minoring in that which was truly major. They had forgotten what was at the very center of Christianity - *Christ*. If knowing Christ and loving Christ and imitating Christ is not sufficient to produce God-honoring lives, then all the rules and knowledge and spiritual experiences in the world will not do the job. At the very core of the Gospel is the belief that Jesus and Jesus *alone* has everything the Christian needs to make him perfect in God's eyes. It's not Christ *plus* anything. Jesus doesn't need anything else to make us what He wants us to be. All He needs is our absolute dependence on Him.

1. The *Supremacy* of Christ – **Col. 1:15-18**.
 - a. Christ was the creator of all things (vss 15-17).
 - b. Christ is head of the church (vs 18a).
 - c. Christ is the firstborn in resurrection (vs 18b).
 - d. He has supremacy in everything else (vs 18c) - certainly He needs supremacy in our hearts.
2. The *Fullness* of God is in Christ – **Col. 1:19; 2:9-10a**.
 - a. Everything that God is is in Christ.
 - b. Everything that we need is in Christ.
3. Our *Foundation* is in Christ – **Col. 1:28; 2:6-7**.
 - a. He is the essence of the message we preach.
 - i. Paul could have taught many things to help these pagans start acting like Christians.

- ii. The one thing he saw as basic was a knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - b. He is what we are rooted and built up in.
- 4. Christ is our *Life* – **Col. 3:1-4**.
 - a. We set our hearts and minds on Him.
 - b. Our lives are swallowed up in the pursuit of Him.
- 5. *Everything* we do is in Jesus – **Col. 3:15-17**.
 - a. His peace rules in our hearts.
 - b. His word dwells in our minds.
 - c. Everything that we say or do is in His name.

CLOSING.

A. Christ is the Beginning and End of Christian Living.

- 1. Nothing else will lead us to God.
- 2. To know great mysteries or see wonderful visions or enjoy magnificent worship periods or hold the highest moral standards is without value if you do not know Jesus Christ.
- 3. Jesus is first and foremost. Everything else becomes important only when built upon a foundation of commitment to Him.
- 4. ***Christians are Christ-Ones.*** Christ is the atmosphere in which we live. He is our source and power. He is our model and guide. We are experts in Jesus Christ. We do not pedal a new moral code. We do not major in deep spiritual mysteries. We are not professional experience hunters. We are a people who know Jesus, and who are committed to knowing Him more every day of our lives.

B. Christ and the Discovery.

- 1. Reentry is a very dangerous point in any space mission.
 - a. A few degrees too low, and the space craft burns up.
 - b. A few degrees too high, and the craft will bounce off the atmosphere and be catapulted into space.
 - c. There is only a very narrow "window" through which the space craft must pass if a safe landing is to be attained.
- 2. Jesus is the window of everyone who would land safely in the arms of God.
 - a. If you fail to get Him right, even over the little things, the margin of error will mean spiritual death.
 - b. Only by getting Him right can we be assured safe landing.