

Pre-eminence of Christ

KNOWING CHRIST

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

In this knowledge of Christ, there is an excellency above all other knowledge in the world; there is nothing more pleasing and comfortable, more animating and enlivening, more ravishing and soul contenting; only Christ is the sun and centre of all divine revealed truths, we can preach nothing else as the object of our faith, as the necessary element of your soul's salvation, which doth not some way or other, either meet in Christ, or refer to Christ; only Christ is the whole of man's happiness, the Sun to enlighten him, the Physician to heal him, the Wall of fire to defend him, the Friend to comfort him, the Pearl to enrich him, the Ark to support him, the Rock to sustain him under the heaviest pressures, "As an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. 32:2). Only Christ is that ladder between earth and heaven, the Mediator between God and man, a mystery, which the angels of heaven desire to pry, and peep, and look into (I Peter 1:12). Here is a blessed subject indeed; who would not be glad to pry into it, to be acquainted with? "This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent" (John 17:3).

Isaac Ambrose

THOU EXCEEDETH THE FAME THAT I HEARD. (2 Chron. 9:6)

Thou! Lord Jesus! for whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee (Psalm 78:25). Thou! who hast loved me and washed me from my sins in thine own blood. Thou! who hast given Thyself for me. Thou! who hast redeemed me, called me, drawn me, waited for me. Thou! who hast given me Thy Holy Spirit to testify of Thee. Thou! whose life is mine, and with whom my life is entwined, so that nothing shall separate or untwine it. "Thou exceedeth the fame that I heard!"

Yet, I heard a great fame of Thee. They told me Thou wert gracious. They told me as much as they could put into words. And they said, 'Come and see' (John 1:46). I tried to come, but I could not see. My eyes were holden (Luke 24:16), though Thou wast 'not far' (Job 19:27). Then I heard what Thou wast to others, and I knew that Thou wast the same Lord. But now I believe, not because of their saying, for I have heard Thee myself, and know that Thou are indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world — my Saviour. Thee,

'whom I shall see for myself (Act 17:27), I now know for myself; my Lord and my God (John 20:28).

I did not understand how there could be satisfaction here and now. It seemed necessarily future, in the very nature of things. It seemed, in spite of Thy promises, that the soul could never be filled with anything but heaven. But Thou fillest, Thou satisfiest it.

Now it wonderingly rejoiceth,
Finds in thee unearthly bliss,
Rests in Thy divine perfection,
And is satisfied with this.

Altogether fair and lovely,
Evermore the same to me;
Precious, infinite Lord Jesus,
I am satisfied with Thee!

For Thou exceedeth the fame that I heard. I find in Thee more than I heard, more than I expected, 'more than all.' The excellency of the knowledge of thee, Christ Jesus my Lord, not only includes all other treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but outshines them all. Every other fame that I heard has had some touch of disappointment; imagination could always flash beyond reality, even if actual expectation, quieted by experience, had kept within the mark. But 'now I see' (John 9:25) that Thou exceedeth all that God-given mental powers can reach; every glimpse is but an opening vista, all the music is but a prelude; what I know of Thee only magnifies the yet unknown. All the God-implanted craving for something beyond, all the instinct of the infinite, is met, responded to, satisfied in Thee. There is no part of my being but finds its full scope and its true sphere in Thee.

Thou exceedeth all that I heard in every respect. No one could tell me what Thy pardoning love, Thy patience, Thy long-suffering would be to me. No one could tell me how Thy strength, Thy grace, Thy marvelous help would fit into the least as well as the greatest of my continual needs. No one could tell me what grace was poured into Thy lip for me (Psalms 45:2). Thou art All to each of Thy children; a complete and all-excelling Christ to every one, as if it were only for each one. Thy secret is with each (Psalms 25:14). Thou givest the white stone and the new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it (Rev. 2:17). And if Thou exceedeth all that I heard, now and here amid the shadows and the veils, how far more exceeding will be Thy unshadowed and unveiled glory! Lord Jesus, I bless Thee for Thy promised eternity. For I shall need it all to praise Thee, that Thou exceedeth the fame that I heard!

F. R. Havergal

We must never imagine that all our Saviour did and said is recorded in the Bible or in any other book. If all the miracles He did, sermons He preached, works He performed, and words He spoke had been written in books, the world itself could not contain the books that must be written; for His is from everlasting to everlasting. However, God has been pleased to have written all that is necessary and needful for us to know concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ that we may know Him, believe Him, and be brought in saving faith to Him (John 20:31)

Henry Mahan

If Christianity is the mere invention of men, an opiate of the people, or a foolish desire for a happy hunting ground, how do you explain Jesus Christ?

1. His existence in history men cannot deny. He lived in this world. He was born in Bethlehem, walked this earth, died on a Roman cross and witnesses claim that He arose from the grave.
2. Without force or bribery, without arms or money without an earthly kingdom or great possessions, He left a mark on this world as no other person in all of history! He never wrote a book, yet no library is sufficient to hold the books written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has been the theme of more songs than all others combined.
3. All other religious leaders came to live; He came to die! All other messiahs chose as their followers the rich, powerful, and influential — He chose the poor, despised, and the rejected. All other messiahs say, "Follow me, I'll show you the way." He said, "Follow Me, I am the way." All others claim to be messengers of God. He said, "I and the Father are One." All others stay dead; He arose and all of His claims, promises, and work depend on His resurrection. How do you explain Jesus Christ?

Henry Mahan

Though all other things do, yet Christ never can become uninteresting. The beauty of the Rose of Sharon is never lost or withered. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As his body in the grave saw no corruption, so neither can his love, or any of his excellencies. Other beauties have their prime and their fading, but Christ abides eternally. Our delight in creatures is often most at first acquaintance; when we come nearer to them, our delight is abated; but the longer you know Christ, and the nearer you come to him, still the more do you see of his glory. Every farther prospect of Christ entertains the mind with fresh delight. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

John Flavel

IT IS GOD WE WORSHIP

The word "worship" signifies many things, but chief among its meanings is that attitude of fear and awe that grips the heart when one meditates on the greatness of God. No matter how joyful we are, no matter how boldly we come before God's throne of grace, no matter how much confidence we have in Christ, we must remember that it is God we worship. God's greatness and glory are beyond our comprehension so much that our response should sometimes be silence rather than speaking. Often preachers complain that their congregations give no verbal response to the message, no amen's or hallelujah's. I would that God would sometimes speak so powerfully that silence would reign, that the holiness of the hour would be so great so as to make it seem that human response would defile it.

I would not ever have us contrive a certain spirit of worship. But I would have us, each one, to meditate on the Person of God, and by that meditation be moved to an appropriate form of worship.

Pastor Joe Terrell