

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

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When wars have ceased, international leaders have become dust and the poverty of their souls is revealed; when enterprises crumble and the last dream has evaporated; when death has claimed the final person, and those alive are changed for their eternal future; when everything earthly and mundane is over, and each person resides in heaven or hell—what will be important? And what among all that is important will be the *most* important?

This is a question worth thinking about, because finding out what is important in the end will, or at least should, tell you what is important now. That which is important for eternity, that is, for billions of years and more, is surely the most important thing to God for this brief wisp of time called human history. And it should be even more important for you, since you live here for only a small fraction of that wisp.

What if, in your hurry and your worry about so many little things, you actually missed the most important thing?

That which is most important for all time, as is well known only to some, is Jesus Christ. I mean, not just Jesus Christ as a being, but Jesus Christ in the light of what he has done—his life, death, and resurrection. It is a huge gamble to dismiss the one who is the center of everything. There is, in fact, no hope for such a person.



You know what it means to forget the most important element of some concoction—like the sugar in sugar cookies, or the coffee in your coffee and cream, or the lens in your glasses, or the warhead on your nuclear weapon. But some of you have forgotten Christ, and his death and resurrection, as if he were not essential to life and eternity. He is, rather, *everything* related to life and eternity. This is why I say there is no hope for such an omission.

Christ's perfect life, his sacrificial and substitutionary death, and his victorious authenticating resurrection provide the foundation of all hope. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) stated, "Christianity begins with a triumphant indicative." God declares that something is *done* on behalf of those who will come to him—Jesus lived without sin as the perfect lamb, took on their sin and died in their place as the adequate sacrifice, and was raised bodily over the power of sin and death *for them*.

To think little or not at all about the centerpiece of history, is to guarantee that you will have no place in heaven. It is not enough to merely be religious by going to church on holidays or even every Sunday, or doing a few other well-meaning duties. It is not religion that makes you acceptable to God. You must be "accepted in the Beloved," that is, in *Christ's merits alone*. (Eph. 1: 6) Only trusting in Christ, resting your confidence in the one who lived, died, and was raised again, can assure you of heaven.

To believe otherwise, to add your little bit of religious activity to Christ as if you could impress God, is actually insulting to God. Either Christ is sufficient or he stands in need of you to satisfy God's wrath and to provide your acceptance before the Father. The declaration of Scripture is that he does not need you; rather, you need him, for without a living relationship with him through faith, you could not possibly be received by the Father. Christ cried out on the cross, "It is finished," meaning, it is paid in full. But "If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died needlessly." (Gal. 2: 21)

You may say, "Anyone can begin a religion like Christianity." But you give away the fact that you think of Christianity as only a system of duties. You are wrong. It is about Christ and what he has done that could not be done by any other. If you are merely a moralist, using some Christian terminology at times, don't think you have become a true Christian. Moralism damns, in and of itself. Christianity is not based on what you do, but on Christ, his death, and his resurrection. If this is too much to swallow now, you will avow it later, but sadly, when it is too late.

It does not have to be this way. You may put your trust in Christ, terminating your confidence in yourself as sufficient to please God. You may enjoy now, before the end of time and throughout the rest of time, an authentic relationship with him. There is a world, an eternal world, of difference between trusting him and dismissing him as will one day be completely understood.

It is Christ who will one day be seen by all, rightly, to be the center of everything, the apex of history, the hope of mankind, the reference point of the universe, the conversation and exaltation of heaven, the eternal joy of millions, and the eternal bane of even more. And it is *now* that you should trust him.

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