

## CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY

Christ and Christianity are not the same. While this may seem irrelevant to discuss, the distinction bears upon something foundational. Christ is eternal, immortal, and invisible (1 Tim. 1:17). Christianity is not. It has a beginning and an end. The earthly manifestation of Christ in His people will someday be absorbed by eternal reality, Christ will ultimately deliver His Kingdom to the Father and God will again be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). If we have the “mind of Christ” we must think like Jesus thought. As the song writer put it: *“The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace”* Thus, the earthly manifestation of Christ in His church (that is Christianity) must always be subservient to God.

It almost seems irrational to write upon this subject. Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it, why shouldn't we? The answer, of course, is that there is nothing wrong with loving the church any more than there is something wrong with loving your father and mother. Most of us do not love either the church or our parents as much as we should. Why then even discuss the subject? The answer is rooted in something basic and foundational. Jesus said that whoever loves his father or mother more than we love Him is not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37). Surely we cannot dismiss these words of Christ as though they were never spoken.

The supreme commandment of Scripture is that we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30) To love anyone, or anything more than God, is idolatry. God is a jealous God! (Ex. 20:5) He will not even allow our love for parents or children to take priority over Him. God made Himself manifest in the person of Jesus Christ and ordained that He become the chief focus of our praise and worship. Human vocabulary is exhausted in Jesus. He is the alpha and the omega. Everything that God wants to say He says through Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is both the Foundation upon which Christianity stands and the Door by which we gain entrance. Yet, as we have already pointed out, someday, even Jesus will fall down before God and relinquish everything to His Father. The words “all in all” in 1 Cor. 15:28 are translated in the RSV as “everything to everyone”. This is the way it was before creation, and this is the way that it will be for all eternally. When the creation has disappeared with a great noise and melted with fervent heat, God alone will rule and all rebellion will be destroyed.

In ancient times men fell away from God because they worshiped and served created things more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Satan used a similar tactic to seduce Eve. He tricked her into focusing on the tree that God created, rather than the unseen Power that brought the tree into reality. He pointed out that the fruit was good to look at, good for food, and desirable to make one wise. God, by comparison, could not be seen. Thus, in her mind, it seems that the carnal creation took precedence over spiritual reality. It is not wrong to appreciate the things that God has created, but it is vitally important that they never take priority over God.

The Mosaic Law commanded: **“If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.” (Exod 20:25)** Why does man “defile” an altar when he “dresses” it with a tool? I'm not sure, but perhaps a part of the reason involves the human tendency to admire the work of our own hands. There may be many pictures on the wall of the kindergarten class, but it is hard not to focus on the one that we painted. While this tendency seems innocent in little children, it can be fatal in our relationship with God.

Moses risked his life and worked hard to bring freedom to the children of Israel. When they crossed the Red Sea, however, it was not a time for Moses and Aaron to congratulate one another for a job well done, it was time to praise the Lord for what He had done. Note carefully the Song of Moses: **“I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.” (Exod 15:1-2)**

Since this is the very song we will be singing in heaven for all eternity, let's start singing it right now (Rev. 15:3).