

The Most Important Question
by R. A. Torrey (1856-1928)

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Matthew 27:22

If I should put to this audience tonight the question, What is the most important question of the day, I presume I would get a great variety of answers. Some of you would say that the disarmament question or the Four Power Treaty question was the most important question of the day. Some would say that the labor question was the most important question of the day. And still others would say that the Prohibition question was the most important question of the day, and so on. But all these answers would be wrong. There is another question of vastly more importance than any one of these, a question of the right decision on which immeasurably more depends than on the decision of any of these questions. That question is this, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?"

It is not a new question. Pontius Pilate asked it nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and answered it wrong, and his earthly life went out in darkness, and his eternity was endless torment. Thousands on thousands have asked it since. A right decision to that question hangs everything that is really worth having for time and for eternity for each one of us. If you do the right thing with Jesus, the Christ of God, you will get everything that is really worth having for time as well as for eternity, whether a right decision is given on these various other questions or not. If you do the wrong thing with Jesus, the Christ of God, you will lose everything that is worth having for time as well as for eternity, even though all these other questions are answered correctly.

I. What We Will Get if We Do the Right Thing

with Jesus Christ

Let us look at some of the things that we will get if we do the right thing with Jesus Christ.

1. In the first place, if you do the right thing with Jesus you will get the forgiveness of all your sins. Peter says in Acts 10:43, "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Now this statement is as plain as day, and in it God's inspired apostle declares that "everyone who believes in" Jesus Christ "receives forgiveness of [his] sins." If the vilest sinner on earth would come in here tonight and would put his trust in Jesus Christ, the moment he did it all his sins would be forgiven, blotted out.

The forgiveness of our sins depends solely on what we do with Jesus Christ. It does not depend on our prayers or on our penances or on our good works. If you do the right thing with Jesus Christ you get forgiveness of all your sins, whatever else you may do or not do. If you do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ

you will not get forgiveness of sins, whatever else you may do or not do. The same truth is put in a different way in John 3:18, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

What an unspeakable blessing the forgiveness of all your sins is. Wealth, honors, pleasures, are not so eagerly to be desired as the forgiveness of our sins. All of them together are not to be compared with the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness of sin brings joy anywhere it comes, whether it be into the palace or into the prison cell. King David had wealth, honor, power, pleasures, and privileges without number, but he was not happy. Indeed, he was perfectly miserable. His own description of his condition is found in the Thirty-second Psalm, the third and fourth verses; "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." Then he found forgiveness of sin and in his joy he shouted, "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit" (Psalm 32:1-2).

Down in a wretched cell in Sing Sing Prison there was a man under a fifteen-year sentence for manslaughter. He was, of course, a very unhappy man. But there in his cell he got hold of a Bible and read it, and through the Bible the Holy Spirit showed him the Lord Jesus as his Savior who died in his place, and he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. It was in the middle of the night when he finally found the Savior through meditating on what he had read in the Word of God, and though it was in the middle of the night and in a prison cell, such joy came into his soul that he began to shout. The guard came along and rapped on his door and told him to keep still. "I can't keep still," he shouted back, "my sins are forgiven." Yes, there is a more wonderful joy in knowing that our sins are all forgiven than there is in anything that this world has to give. And we get this forgiveness of sin by simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. In the second place, you will get peace of conscience by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. It is a blessed thing to have a conscience that does not accuse you, a conscience that has found perfect peace. It is an awful thing to have a conscience that accuses. It is the greatest misery on earth. It drives many men and many women to suicide. Oh, in what agony of mind men and women have come to me from different ranks of society because of an accusing conscience. And there are many who never unburden their hearts to others who are in misery from the same cause. There are men and women here tonight who spend days and nights of misery because of an accusing conscience. You try to drown the voice of conscience in many ways, but you fail utterly. You try to drown the voice of conscience in pleasure and indulgence. You try to drown the voice of conscience in business. You try to drown the voice of conscience in drink and in drugs, and in other ways; but you do not succeed. You never will succeed.

One who perhaps knows as much about the life of the movie colony in Hollywood as anyone else told a friend of mine a few weeks ago of two of the leading stars in the movie world, two women whose names are constantly in the daily papers and who are admired and envied by thousands, that they were the hopeless slaves of drugs, and all over this land people who are counted gifted, and on whom others look in envy, are trying to silence the voice of conscience by drugs. But no one ever yet found real peace in that way, and no one ever will. Jesus Christ alone can give the guilty conscience peace. In Romans 5:1, God put it through the Apostle Paul in this way, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do the right thing with Jesus Christ and you will get true peace of conscience, deep, abiding peace, perfect peace. As Isaiah puts it, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (26:3). But do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ, and you cannot find peace of conscience in this world or in the next, no matter what else you may do to get peace.

I was dealing once in my office with a woman who told me that she had been in a perfect hell for fourteen years because of an accusing conscience. I pointed her to Jesus Christ. I showed her from God's Word how all her sins had been laid on Jesus Christ. She believed it. She took God's Word for it, put her trust in Him as her atoning Savior. After fourteen years of agony, of hell on earth, she went out from my office that day with a radiant countenance, for she had found peace of conscience in the only way in which peace of conscience can ever be found by anybody, through her Lord Jesus Christ. And that joy continues until this day.

3. In the third place, you will get deliverance from the power of sin by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. It is a dreadful thing to be in the power of sin. There is no other slavery so binding, so degrading, and so crushing as the slavery of sin. We all know what a dreadful thing it is to be in the power of some sins. We all know, for example, what an awful thing it is to be in the power of strong drink. We know what an awful thing it is to be in the power of morphine, or cocaine, or some other kind of drug. Many of us know through stories, distressing and agonizing, that have been poured into our ears, what an awful thing it is to be in the power of lust. How many men have come to me in despair this past year and told the story of their dreadful slavery. It is an awful thing to be in the power of sin of any kind.

There is, however, a way to get free. There is a way by which any man or woman who is the slave of any sin of any kind can get instantaneous and complete deliverance from the power of that sin. There is, however, only one way. That way is by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul was once in the power of sin. He was once helplessly and hopelessly enslaved. With all the power of an unusually strong will he tried to break away from the power of sin, but the more he tried to break away, the more completely he seemed to be in sin's grip forever, until at last, in utter despair, he cried, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). And then he found Christ and took Him as his Deliverer from the power of sin, and he

found perfect freedom and cried again, "Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!" You cannot get out of sin's power unless you do the right thing with Jesus Christ. You may get free from some bad habits. You may, for example, give up drinking without the help of Christ, though very few do; but whether you do or do not, you will not get out of sin's grip, you will simply turn from one sin to another. Christ alone can save you from sin's power. I could stand here by the hour and tell you of men and women I have personally known, men and women as completely enslaved by sin in one form or another as any man or woman who ever walked the earth, whom the Lord Jesus Christ has set free when they did the right thing with Him.

4. In the fourth place, you will get great joy by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter says "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy," by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. You cannot get inexpressible and glorious joy in any other Way. You know happy people, of course, who are not Christians, but you do not know anyone who is not a Christian who has "inexpressible and glorious joy." You do not know anyone who is not a Christian who has the deep, constant, satisfying, and overflowing joy, that those men and women have who are not merely nominal Christians but real Christians, those men and women who have fully accepted Christ as their personal Savior and are really trusting God for the forgiveness of all their sins because they fully believe God's testimony concerning Jesus Christ having borne every one of their sins when He died on the cross, thus fully settling their sins forever, and who have without reservation surrendered the entire control of their thoughts and lives to Jesus Christ, and who are confessing Jesus Christ as their Lord before the world every reasonable opportunity they get, and who are watching for every opportunity to lead others to Christ, and who are serving Jesus Christ with all their strength every day.

Do the right thing with Jesus Christ and you get this wonderful joy. Reject Jesus Christ and you lose it. How foolish men and women are! There are many men in this audience tonight who are rejecting Christ because they think they will lose joy if they take Christ. Are you blind, men? Do you not see that those who have taken Christ really are happier than you are? Do you not see that many Christians are happier in poverty than skeptics and worldly people are in wealth? Are you deaf, women? Have you not heard many whose word you must believe, and from all ranks of society, testify that they have found a joy since they took Christ that they never dreamed of in the world?

I do not think that many of you could tell me much that I do not know about this world's joys. I have tasted pretty much all of them, but I never knew "inexpressible and glorious joy," until I took Jesus Christ. I do now. My every day is full of joy. I have perplexities, I have annoyances, I have experiences that could easily prove exasperating. I have burdens of many kinds, I have what may appear to be great losses, I have things said to me and written to me, and

said and printed about me, that would cut to the quick if I did not know the Lord Jesus; but, through it all, every day is inexpressibly happy. Not so long ago I had more things come to me that might have caused grief and anxiety and worry and heartache and deep sorrow than in almost any other week of my life, but it was a radiantly happy week. Why? Simply because of what Jesus Christ is to me, and what He is to me, just because I have done the right thing with Him.

5. In the fifth place, if you do the right thing with Jesus Christ you will get eternal life. Eternal Life! What a wonderful phrase that is, eternal life. Life that never ends! Life that knows no death! Life of unutterable beauty and dignity and honor and glory and rapture! Life that is endless in its duration and perfect in its quality! Life like the life of God Himself. Eternal life! What has the world to put in comparison with that? What is the wealth of a millionaire compared with eternal life? I would rather be a penniless pauper all my days, living in destitution and hunger and rags and cold, and have eternal life, than to roll in wealth all my days and have all that wealth can buy, and not have eternal life. I have no envy of the rich. No, I know their lives and hearts too well. I have often a greater pity for them than for the poor, for often they are more to be pitied than the poor. The life of the average millionaire is a sad, sad life.

What is the wisdom of the world's greatest scientist or philosopher compared with eternal life? What are the honors of a great general or a mighty ruler of men compared with eternal life? What are the pleasures of the most devoted seeker of pleasure compared with eternal life? Put all the world has, absolutely everything the world can give, into one pan of the scales. Put eternal life into the other scale. See the world's side go up. It is lighter than the smallest dust in the balance in comparison with eternal life. Eternal life! Oh, who can fathom all the depth of meaning that there is in these two wondrous words? And you get it by simply doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. Do the right thing with Jesus Christ and you get eternal life. Do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ and you lose eternal life. Listen to God's own Word about that, John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." Listen to God's Word again, "This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12).

Are you going to do the right thing with Jesus Christ now and get eternal life, or are you going to do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ and forever lose eternal life?

6. But there is something better even than eternal life that you get by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ you become a child of God, an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. We read in God's own Word, in John 1:12, "To all who received him, to those who

believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." And in Romans 8:17 we read, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ." Just think of that a moment, a child of God, and an heir of God, and a joint heir (or fellow heir) with Jesus Christ. We have heard these words very often but have we ever stopped to weigh their meaning and to take in their wondrous meaning? A child of God! Think of it! God the Infinite One, God the Creator of all things, God to whom the whole race of men and the whole company of angels is as nothing, less than a speck of dust is in comparison to the whole earth; God in comparison with whom the greatest of philosophers, the mightiest of monarchs, and the purest of saints is less than the most ignorant idiot is in comparison with the greatest philosopher--and we to become His children and His heirs! Heirs of all this Infinite God is and all this Infinite God has. It staggers the mind to try to think of it. That is what is open to each one of us. That is what is open to you and open to me by just doing the right thing with Jesus Christ.

One day, years ago, I met the son and heir of one of the richest men in the whole world, and he invited me to dinner. As I sat and talked with him it seemed to me as if it might be in some respects a fine thing to be the son and heir of the richest millionaire on earth. But that is nothing, just nothing at all, to being a child of God, an heir of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. That is what is open to us, to each one of us; but it can be obtained in only one way, and that is by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ. Do the right thing with Jesus Christ and in a moment you become a child of God, an heir of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. Listen to God's own statement about it again, "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ and you lose forever your chance of becoming a child of God, an heir of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. Oh, what a loss that is! The loss of untold wealth, the loss of earth's greatest honors, the loss of dearest friends, is nothing in comparison with the loss of becoming a child of God, an heir of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. That is the awful cost of doing the wrong thing with Jesus Christ. We see, then, something of what we gain by doing the right thing with Jesus Christ, and something of what we lose by doing the wrong thing with Jesus Christ. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we gain forgiveness of all our sins. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we gain peace of conscience. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we gain deliverance from sin's power. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we gain joy inexpressible and glorious. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we gain eternal life. By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ we become children of God, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. Is it not evident, then, that the most important question of this day and of all days is, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?"

But what will you do with Him? Will you do the right thing with Him, or will you do the wrong thing with Him? Will you do the right thing and gain all, or will you do the wrong thing and lose all? I put the question to each individual reader. What will you do with Jesus? It does not matter whether you are a church member or not, I put the question to you, What will you do with Jesus? I put the question to the most worldly man or woman here as well as to the most religious, "What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ?" I put the question to the one who is most sunken in sin, for there is hope for you of getting all these things if you do the right thing with Jesus Christ, just as much as there is for the most moral and upright and highly respected man or woman here. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" I ask each one of you, Will you do the right thing with Jesus Christ, or will you do the wrong thing with Jesus Christ?

7. But there is something better than anything I have mentioned yet that depends entirely on what you do with Jesus Christ. If you do the right thing with Jesus Christ, then some day you will become just like Him. Listen to what God says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1-2). "What," someone will say, "can I become like Jesus Christ?" Yes, even you can become just like Jesus Christ. Think of it! You and I, with all our present failings, with all our shortcomings, meannesses and pettinesses, some of which we do not see but others see very clearly, for they stick out all over us and generally they stick out most conspicuously on those of us who have the best opinion of ourselves--even we can become just like Him, be like Him in every perfection and glory of His matchless, faultless, glorious, Divine character. Yes, and we can be like Him in the glory of His outward appearance too; for it is written in the Word of God, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21). And how can we become just like Him? By doing the right thing with Jesus Christ.

II. What Is the Right Thing to Do with Jesus Christ?

1. First of all, the right thing to do with Jesus Christ is to receive Him, to receive Him as your Savior. This is evident from the verse that we have quoted already a number of times, John 1:12, "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." He died for your sins. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Will you accept Him as your sin-bearer? Will you say, "Oh, God, I believe what Your Word says about Jesus Christ. I believe He bore my sins in His own body on the cross. I believe every one of my sins was laid on Him and settled fully and

forever when He died on the cross in my place. And I now take Him as my sin-bearer. Forgive all my sins for Jesus Christ's sake"?

Take Him not only as your Savior from the guilt of sin but also as your Savior from the power of sin. He not only died to make atonement for your sins, He also rose again, and He lives today to set you free from the power of sin and to make intercession for you (Hebrews 7:25). Will you take Him now as your Deliverer from the power of sin? Will you come to this risen and mighty Lord Jesus with all your weakness and sins and trust Him to set you free? That is the right thing to do with Jesus Christ: Just take Him as your Savior, your crucified Savior, from the guilt of sin and your risen Savior from the power of sin.

2. The next right thing to do with Jesus is to let Him into your heart. He says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Jesus is standing at the door of every heart. He is knocking at the door of every heart. Will you open the door and let Him in? Who will? Who will say, "Lord Jesus, come in; come in and reign"?

3. The next right thing to do with Jesus is to enthrone Him in your heart. He is the Christ, God's anointed King, because God has made Him so. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Will you enthrone Him as King in your heart? Will you say honestly to Him, "Lord Jesus, take the throne of my heart and live and reign there supreme"? Who will do it?

4. Once more, the right thing to do with Jesus Christ is to confess Him before the world as your Lord and Master. He Himself says in Matthew 10:32, 33, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." And Paul says in Romans 10:9-10, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Who will do it?

There is just one more right thing to do with Jesus.

What is it? Go tell others about Him, when you yourself have taken Him as your Savior and let Him into your heart, and enthroned Him as King and confessed Him before the world as your Lord. When Jesus was here on earth He cast several thousand demons out of a wretched man who was in their control. The condition of that man before he met Jesus was awful beyond description, but the condition of that man after he met Jesus was glorious beyond description. And that man naturally wanted to go with Jesus wherever He went. But Jesus said, "'Return home and tell how much God has done for you.' So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8:39).

Oh, if you have taken Jesus go tell everyone you can about Him and bring every

one you can to Him.

These are the right things to do with Jesus. Who will do them now and gain all that is worth having for time and for eternity? Who of you will take Him as your Savior? Who of you will listen to His voice and let Him into your heart? Who of you will enthrone Him in your heart as King? Who of you will begin the confession of Him as your Lord?