



THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE

Religion vs. Reality For most of my life, I knew religion—but not reality. I knew that I should be rightly related to the church, and I always was; but somehow I failed to learn that I should be (or could be) rightly related to the Lord of the Church—personally—and so I wasn't. I hit the church right in the bulls-eye, and missed Jesus completely. I didn't miss Him by much, but I missed Him.

The Critical Difference All those years I knew *about* Jesus, but I didn't *know* Jesus. And the difference is critical—the difference is, I believe, infinite. For to know Him is to live: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the son of God hath not life" (1 Jn 5:11-12). I knew confirmation, I knew the sacraments, I knew religious activity; and I took it all seriously. I read and studied the Bible; I taught the Bible. I knew church involvement. But I didn't know Jesus—personally. I didn't have that personal relationship. I had received the church, but I had not received Him. And "...as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God..." (Jn. 1:12).

The Ultimate Encounter And then one day, at the uttermost end of myself, I cried out to Him in desperation. Church was no longer enough; I needed Jesus. Religion no longer sustained me. I had to have reality. And He was there. He had been there all along, but I hadn't known it. I came to Him—not to religious commitment or to theological concepts. I came to Him—personally—and gave *Him* what was left of me and what was left of my life. I gave Him all the pain, the

hopelessness and the insoluble problems; and He gave me life—everlasting spiritual life—and the peace that passes understanding. And this personal coming to Him, this ultimate encounter, opened up for me my full inheritance as a child of God. Now there is available to me all God's provision for all my needs; the Jesus of the Bible is now wonderful reality in my life.

Do You Know Him? What about you, dear one? Do you know Him? Is it possible that, like me, you know about Him but don't really know Him? Have you ever come humbly, like a child, and asked Him to give you the gift of life in the Spirit? Have you ever come to Him *personally* and established that all-important personal relationship? Is He reality in your life, or only a historical figure, or a lovely religious concept? Do you only know about Him, or do you know Him? Do you have a relationship only with the church, or do you have a relationship with the Head and Lord of the Church?

Come to Him Now. If you're not sure that you have done so, come to Jesus now. Come to Him simply and honestly, like a child, and acknowledge your need of Him—your desire to really know Him—personally. Toward the end of his life, Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, looked back over a lifetime of exceptional accomplishments. He had the very best education (under the very best teachers), social position, political power and religious honor. He was at the top of the heap; people stood up when he walked into the room. But he said all that was nothing but loss, worthless; it was dung compared with the one thing that mattered in his life. And that one thing was that he knew Jesus (Phil. 3:7-10). Do *you* know Him? If not, or if you just aren't sure, get it settled now. Don't wait—the stakes are too high. Forever is a long time to be wrong. Confess Him now as Lord, believe that God raised Him from the dead (if He isn't alive, He can't help you anyway, and this whole thing is a waste of time). Ask Him to come into your heart, your human spirit, the innermost part of you, and live. Give Him control of your life and allow Him to live His life out through you. He will (Rom. 10:8-13; Rev. 3:20).

He will take you personally into God's family, write your name in His book, and you will never again have to wonder. You won't just know about Him; you will know Him. Get it settled now. He loves you...just like you are; so come to Him...just like you are. That's the only way you *can* come. Come to Him personally, and live.

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