

Bethel

Pulpit

What Think Ye of Christ?

Sermon Number 443

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 23rd January, 2022**

Text: *"What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22. 42).*

This is a chapter full of questions. Probably more questions come in this chapter than in any other part of the gospels. First of all, the Pharisees try the Lord with their questions. Next, their enemies the Sadducees try with their questions, and afterwards the Pharisees come back again – they did not give up – with more questions. It is very, very clear that they did not ask the questions to learn the answer. They were trying to entangle our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And then when they had all been silenced, the Lord Jesus had a question, and it was a vital question, and it was a personal question, and it still rings down the ages in the midst of Bethel Chapel and in our minds and our hearts today: "What think ye of Christ?" "And no man ... durst any more from that day forth ask Him any more questions." They could see His divine sovereignty. They could see His glory in this great question, and there is not a greater one, this great question that He put to them: "What think ye of Christ?"

The godly Scottish minister, preaching on this text, Ralph Erskine, said, "This is the great question of the gospel catechism." You know what he meant. In Scotland they have always been great on catechisms – a catechism asking lots of questions and teaching children the correct answer. This is the greatest of all questions in the gospel catechism.

It has always seemed to me something like this. You remember Daniel, Belshazzar, the writing on the wall, and one was this: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Well, this question: "What think ye of Christ?" is like a pair of divine balances, a pair of scales in which everyone, whoever hears the truth, is being weighed, weighed by Almighty God. There is not going to be any light weight or any mistake in the way it is taking place. This is you and me, every one of us who has heard the gospel of the grace of God, every one of us who has heard this question, had it put to us. This question takes us this morning and it weighs

us – our souls, our religion – it weighs us in these balances. Sadly, solemnly, by nature every one of us is found wanting. Even now concerning many of our thoughts concerning the dear Saviour, if we are honest, we are weighed in the balances and found wanting. None of us surely think as highly of the dear Saviour as we ought.

It is a wonderful thing if in all our thoughts we have some good thoughts of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. One Scripture says this: “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.” Well, there are a multitude of thoughts within us. We cannot really control ourselves and our thoughts. How many different things do we think about during the day? How many things do we think of even when in chapel? How many of our thoughts even in chapel are godly thoughts, blessed thoughts, Christ-exalting thoughts? It is a wonderful thing if at times we can come in here: “In the multitude of my thoughts within me” – and many of them worthless, and many of them worse than worthless – “Thy comforts delight my soul” – these comforts that flow in the gospel, these comforts from our Lord Jesus, and these comforts which delight our soul.

“What think ye of Christ?” Because John Newton, in his well-known hymn, says,

“You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him.”

I can well sympathise with the old preacher, Mr. Charles Dawrant. He was preaching at a certain chapel which I will not name, and when he had finished, a man came up to him and said, “Mr. Dawrant, don’t you think you have been making too much of Jesus Christ?” Mr. Dawrant always used to carry that about with him as perhaps the highest honour he ever had concerning his preaching: “Don’t you think you have been making too much of Jesus Christ?”

“What think ye of Christ?” Perhaps we should start the other way round: What think ye of yourself? Do you think about your lost condition? Do you think about your accountability? Do you think one day you have to meet your Maker? Do you think of how you have to stand before Him and answer? Do you think about being prepared? Do you think about being forgiven? What do you think about yourself? But tell me, tell me, when you are thinking about yourself, and especially thinking about yourself –

perhaps when you are at chapel, or when you are coming to chapel, or you children in Sunday school – do ever those little thoughts arise: the Lord Jesus, who is He? And what has He done? And what a wonderful Person He must be. But do I really know anything about Him, or do I want to know anything about Him? Do I feel my need of Him? Do any of you have these kind of thoughts?

“What think ye of Christ?” Now there is a lovely word, and it is a promise. It is made to those who think upon His name (Malachi 3. 16, 17). What a comfort it has been made to many of the Lord’s little ones, and may it be made a comfort to the Lord’s little ones here this morning: those “that thought upon His name.” But we do not want to take this for granted. Many can say, I just think upon His name from time to time. The point is, when you think upon His name, does it have any effect? Is there something within which says, “This is what I need; this is what I want; this is what I must have”? That is how we need to think upon His name. Isn’t there one of our hymns, and one line says, “My thoughts fly out at Jesus’ name”? Do you ever find that – the name of our Lord Jesus, and your thoughts fly out at Jesus’ name?

“What think ye of Christ?” Well, I do not want to give you just a long catalogue, but may it be as led by the Spirit, and may the Lord be in it.

“What think ye of Christ?” What think ye of *the love of Christ*? Do you ever think about it – that “matchless love that brought the Lord of glory from above,” that love to lost, unworthy sinners, who must for ever have perished in hell, were not salvation free? What think ye of the love of Christ, that matchless condescension, that amazing stoop, that sacred word: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee”? Amidst your thoughts, the many thoughts you have, some necessary thoughts, thoughts during the week, thoughts in your business, thoughts in your home, some of you, thoughts about your health, but do you ever think in your thoughts of the Saviour’s love? “Was ever love like this?” You cannot understand it, you cannot deserve it, but as you think about it, do you think about it with admiration? And as you think about it with admiration, do you long, do you pray that you might have an interest in that love?

Because surely when we speak on a point like, “What think ye of Christ?” if any of us have right thoughts, good thoughts about the Lord

Jesus, it will endear Him to us, it will make Him precious to us, and it will always cause us to pray. “What think ye of Christ?” If there is no prayer in your thoughts, then there is something sadly amiss. Your thoughts concerning Christ cannot be right if you are never having to pray to Him. Even go as a beggar, empty handed. You want Him to do something for you. It is something you cannot do for yourself. “What think ye of Christ?” O may that word sink into your heart.

What think ye of *His precious blood*? What think ye of the blood of Christ? At Haslingden, there used to be a saying. It used to come in at the prayer meetings: “We would not dare, neither would we desire, to speak glibly of the blood of Christ.” We have some most beautiful hymns concerning the Saviour’s precious blood. I wonder what your thoughts are when you are singing about it.

What think ye of *those dreadful sufferings* that the Lord Jesus endured? What do you think of them? We tremble to speak of them: the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the vile treatment that He received in the judgment hall, and then those cruel nails, and that cruel spear, and that cruel crown of thorns. I wonder if when you have been thinking about it, it has ever been brought home like this:

“Thy temples, Immanuel, bled,
That mine might with glory be crowned.”

That was a hymn that was specially blessed to me in my spiritual beginnings. It is 162 in Gadsby’s. I have never heard it sung at Bethel. I have never given it out anywhere. I think once I heard it given out in my early days when I was preaching at Watford.

“What think ye?” This is *the eternal Son of God*, the One before whom the angels dwell, the One the angels worship. And now, O those agonies and the deeper agonies of His holy soul. It is no wonder the sky was darkened, and the rocks trembled and were rent, and that mysterious Scripture, that even some of the saints who had died came out of the graves and they went and showed themselves to many in Jerusalem. But O the terrible sufferings the Lord endured!

“What think ye of Christ?” O but what think ye of the wonders of His death, *the wonders of redemption*? One of our hymns has that little caption over the top: “The wonders of redemption.”

“And did the Holy and the Just,
The Sovereign of the skies,
Stoop down to wretchedness and dust,
That guilty worms might rise?”

O but the accomplishments, when you think of the vilest sinner out of hell, you think of Manasseh. It seems as if the Scriptures cannot paint him black enough, and yet that precious blood was sufficient to wash away all his sin and every stain. O what think ye of a suffering Saviour? What think you of His precious blood? These are the great questions.

“What think ye of Christ?” What think ye of *His righteousness*? Well, if you know yourself, you will know two things: that God demands a perfect righteousness from every creature who ever lived, and secondly, you will know that you cannot provide that righteousness, and if you do not, and if you cannot, then you must perish, because it will be demanded in the great day.

What think ye of the glories of Christ in being willing to live that perfect, holy, spotless life, a life of righteousness, and then imputing it, reckoning it to the account of poor, unworthy, wretched sinners who have no righteousness of their own? O what think ye of the righteousness of Christ?

And we have just mentioned His glory. O what think ye of *the glory of Christ*?

“See where it shines in Jesus’ face,
The brightest image of His grace!”

But what think ye of *His glorious resurrection*? What think ye of Christ buried, Christ rising again, triumphing over all the powers of death and hell? “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” But do you ever think, a *risen* Saviour? “We preach Christ crucified.” O what think ye of Christ crucified? But ever remember, He is not a dead Christ; He is a living Christ. What think ye of this living Christ? But do you know Him? Perhaps we should press the question further. “What think ye of Christ?” What *know* ye of Christ? He is risen to die no more. He gives everlasting life to His people. But do you and I really know Him? We hear of Him, we sing of Him, but do we really know Him? Wasn’t that a lovely hymn, and doesn’t it really open up the Scripture this evening:

“To *know* my Jesus crucified,
By far excels all things beside”?

Not just to know *of* Him, to know *about* Him. The devils know that and tremble. But to know Him personally and savingly. I think there was one of the dear old godly women at Bethel before I came here, and she was asked what she wanted to know. I think she said, “I want to know the Saviour personally and lovingly.” Well, that is it, isn’t it! Because to know Him is to love Him. O but isn’t it solemn how little we do know, and how little we do love Him! But to know Him personally and lovingly!

O but the power of His resurrection. This is what we want to know, to experience at Bethel. What do you know of Christ under the preaching of the gospel? Is your heart ever touched? Is it ever melted? Is it ever opened? Do you ever long to feel the power of His resurrection? Why? Because you feel so much of the deadness and darkness in yourself. O but that power of Christ’s resurrection. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.”

“What think ye of Christ?” I have found in my little life at times it has been profitable to seek to meditate and think upon the Lord Jesus in so many aspects of His beautiful life. I mean, *the birth of the Lord Jesus*. What think ye of Christ in the manger? There has been a lot of talking about Him and singing about Him. What do we really think about Christ in the manger? One old minister said it is the highest pinnacle to which faith can reach, to look on that little, dear Babe and realise this is true, almighty God, and to worship Him as true, almighty God. “What think ye of Christ” in His incarnation, Christ in the manger?

But “what think ye of Christ” in *His baptism*? I have seen such a beauty in the baptism of our Lord Jesus. “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

“What think ye of Christ” in *His temptation*, His willingness to be tempted, that He who is perfect, infallible, yet was capable of being tempted, and really tempted, and “suffered being tempted,” and not capable of ever sinning, because His sacred humanity never existed apart from His divine Person? “What think ye?”

“Our Saviour stood the fiery test,
And we shall stand through Him.”

But it is every aspect.

“What think ye of Christ,” *Christ exalted*, the Christ one day returning to judge the world in righteousness?

We might think of the opposite: What think ye of *creation*, and “what think ye of Christ?” Do you believe that “by Him were all things created,” and without Him nothing was created that was made? Do you believe that the dear Saviour is that almighty God who by one word of His mouth created all things?

But in your thoughts, do you ever think of how one day He is going to return? Many people foolishly have tried to explain too many of the details and tried foolishly to fix a date. There are some things which are clear. This glorious Christ *will come* the second time. He will come personally. He will come in great glory. He will come to separate His people from the world. He will come to take His people to be for ever with Himself. He will come to declare that dreadful word – O may no-one here ever listen to that, ever hear it: “Depart: I never knew you.” O what think ye of *the glories of Christ* in that day?

The great Dr. Owen wrote his greatest work, *The Glory of Christ*, and he had not just finished it, and he was dying, and they brought him the last proofs. He said, “Now I have finished my work on the glory of Christ, and now I am about to go and see that glory of Christ for myself, and that for ever.” O may that be our blessed, eternal portion!

“What think ye of Christ?” There are so many things in *providence*, so many things concerning the Christian’s behaviour. What about a word like this: “I am crucified with Christ”? What think you of a word like this? Are you willing to be crucified with Christ? Are you willing to die to the world? “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” “What think ye of Christ” in a word like that? What think you of His commandments to take up the cross and follow Him? What think you of obedience to Christ? What think ye of being a true follower of Christ? What think ye about being commanded to walk worthy of Christ? O the high standard of it!

But then, the other side. “What think ye of Christ” in *His tender compassion* and sympathy, that He knows, He understands, He cares, that He comes where you are? We think of all the afflicted ones amongst us at present. “What think ye of Christ?” Do you believe He is in control? Do you believe He is able to do exceeding and far abundantly above all that you ask or think? Do you believe that He is almighty? O, “What think ye of Christ?” It is only the Holy Spirit really who can give us right thoughts of Christ, and with those right thoughts of Christ, there will be right desires for Christ. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

“What think ye of Christ?” It is such a personal word. It comes right home; it touches our conscience. May it touch every conscience this morning. May we be able to give an answer.

“What think ye of Christ?” I am going to close with a sad thing. When I was a teenage boy, one Saturday with some school friends I went to a football match, and actually it was a long way from home. I do not think I had any good, godly, spiritual thoughts. But entering this football ground, there was a man standing all alone, a man in a dark suit, and he was holding up a large placard, and it had just these words on it: “What think ye of Christ?” It seemed terribly solemn to me. It hit me. I thought of all the Lord’s dear people, and how they thought rightly of Christ, and I know that I did not. But that feeling only lasted for a short time, and very soon afterwards it was completely forgotten. Well, I do hope, beloved friends, the preaching this morning will not be like that, as if I am holding up a placard to you with these words, “What think ye of Christ?” May they have a lasting effect, and may the Lord Jesus Himself by His Spirit write them on your heart.