

Explore the Bible: Unashamed

February 9, 2021

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 28 focuses on Luke 9:18-27.*

Jesus had spent three years with his disciples. As he prepared to make his way from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem and the fate that awaited him there, Jesus wanted to know if his disciples had fully understood the lessons of those past three years. Had they fully comprehended exactly who he was? And so he asks them two penetrating questions: “Who do the crowds say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?”

As a professor at Dallas Baptist University, I give a lot of exams in which I ask a lot of questions. And I know I’ve given some pretty tough final exams in my day. I like to think that in questioning his disciples in Luke 9 Jesus was giving them a kind of oral final exam that contained just two questions. But what monumentally important questions they were.

Jesus first asked his disciples what “the word on the street” was concerning his identity. What were people saying about him? That was an important question, but it was just a primer for the next question Jesus asked. And for me, this question is the most important question in all of the Bible.

In fact, it really is the most important question in all of life. “*Who do you say I am?*” That’s the most important question in life because its answer has eternal consequences, doesn’t it? How a person answers that question will determine where he or she will spend eternity. And it’s a question that every person will have to answer in some way, some day.

‘The great trilemma’

What are the options people have in answering this ultimate question of questions? I’ve always loved how C.S. Lewis framed it in his famous “great trilemma” posited in his classic book, *Mere Christianity*. Lewis asserted Jesus either was a liar, a lunatic or the Lord. He wrote: “You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Liar, lunatic, or Lord. There’s the “great trilemma.” Lewis argues that these three are the only real alternatives one can choose from in explaining the identity of Jesus. These are the only viable answers one can give to that ultimate final exam question in life. Either Jesus was the most deceitful liar in all of human history or else the most crazed lunatic who ever lived ... or else he was who he said he was, and is: He is Lord.

Thankfully, Peter gave the right answer to the question. And I’m sure his Instructor was most pleased that at least one of his students had aced that final exam. Peter’s simple two-word response demonstrated that he passed that test with flying colors. Who was Jesus? Peter simply declared that he was “God’s Messiah” (Luke 9:20b, NIV).

What is your answer?

What about you? Have you answered that most important question in all of life? Just to remind you, everyone will have to give an answer to that question in some way, some day. And the fact is, one day everyone will ultimately give but one answer. Everyone will acknowledge Jesus’ true identity. Everyone will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. The Apostle Paul reminds us: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him

the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11, NIV).”

There’s one big difference, however, in the how and when a person answers that ultimate final exam question. A person *can give* that right answer in this lifetime and live forever. Or a person *will give* that right answer in judgment in the life to come, but tragically, that answer then will come all too late. What about you? How and when will you answer that most important question in life?

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