

Text: Luke 9:18-26

Title: Who is Jesus, and What Must I do About It?

Truth: Jesus calls us to follow Him without reserve.

Date/Location: Sunday March 24, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

The popular encyclopedia Wikipedia says this about the existence of Jesus:

“The historicity of Jesus is the question of whether or not Jesus of Nazareth historically existed (as opposed to being a purely mythical figure). The question of historicity was generally settled in scholarship in the early 20th century, and today scholars in the field agree that a Jewish man called Jesus of Nazareth did exist in the Herodian Kingdom of Judea and the subsequent Herodian tetrarchy in the 1st century CE, upon whose life and teachings Christianity was later constructed.”

“...The idea that Jesus was a purely mythical figure has been and still is considered an untenable fringe theory in academic scholarship for more than two centuries, but has gained popular attention in recent decades due to the growth of the internet.

“The criterion of multiple attestation is used to argue that attestation by multiple independent sources confirms his existence. Besides the gospels and the letters of Paul, non-biblical works that are considered sources for the historicity of Jesus include a mention in Antiquities of the Jews by Jewish historian Josephus (dated circa 93–94 CE) and a mention in Annals by Roman historian Tacitus (circa 116 CE).”¹

The subsequent matters regarding His teachings, death, burial, resurrection, and further work in the early church is not so uniformly accepted by “scholarship.” But Christians are entirely convinced based on, among other things, the same criteria described above. We turn now to our text in Luke 9:18 with this focus in mind.

I. Who is Jesus? V. 18-20

A. Curiously, Luke jumps over a series of events that Mark covers in 6:45-8:26. But he does note that Jesus was alone praying. Luke then records Jesus asking a question about His identity.

1. Today many people are obsessed about figuring out their own identity, mainly regarding the most basic aspects of their person such as

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicity_of_Jesus. Wikipedia is not a religious or conservative source.

gender and sexuality. The Holy Scriptures tell us what our identity is as people—made in God’s image, fallen from the ideals of that image, and destined for eternity apart from God.

2. The question of human identity is settled. The Bible is more concerned with who GOD is, and here, with who Jesus is. There was a lot of confusion about Jesus. Those closest to him *and* those at a distance often asked a question like, “Who is this guy?” (Matthew. 21:10; Luke 5:21, 7:49, 8:25, 9:9; John 12:34). God planned that it would be best if He did not come out plainly and loudly proclaim who He was, but rather to let it “grow” on people and let the evidence speak for itself. But neither did the Son avoid identifying himself, as in this passage.

B. The disciples offer some answers: John the Baptist; Elijah; one of the old prophets. What is common to all of these is that they are Jews who would have been raised from the dead. This suggests that the people considered Jesus’s teaching and miracles to be so akin to the days of old (we would call those Old Testament times) that it was not a stretch to think that Jesus was cut from the same cloth. John the Baptist was himself bringing a message of repentance and kingdom that would have been familiar to any Jewish person. Jesus also had a message and ministry that was so close to the Old Testament that they considered him to be in continuity with those prophets of old. But none of these answers were correct. They may have missed the obvious answer because Jesus was not doing exactly what they expected a Messiah to do—to throw off Rome’s occupation or otherwise “look” mighty like David their former king.

C. Jesus pressed the question home to the disciples—what say *you*? And, since that question is echoing in our ears, I ask you the same. What do *you* say about Jesus?

He is somebody. He is something. If nothing else, it seems unavoidable that you must deal with the historicity of Jesus, lest you be one of those fringe outliers. Some unique things happened around him. He made tremendous claims, and he backed them up. The miracles; the teaching; his unique manner of death with the darkness and the earthquake; the resurrection; the post-resurrection appearances; more teaching; the ascension; the post-ascension messages and appearances...the multiple attestation of all of this.

D. Peter spoke for himself, but I suspect he also spoke for the group. He had realized that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God. This realization came from God in Heaven (Matt. 16:16) opening his eyes to see what had been

before Him in the recent months. He saw what Jesus wanted him to see, what Jesus was praying for them to see. Such identification would allow their faith to be solid—for how can you believe in someone of whose identity you are unsure?

What did Peter mean by *Messiah*? Hebrew language *Messiah* = Greek language Christ = anointed one. But what does *that* mean? It refers to a person anointed with oil (perhaps figuratively, though literally for Jesus in Luke 7:38) who is thus marked for some task. It means that Jesus is the special promised one in the Old Testament. John 1:41, 4:25-26; Daniel 9:25-26; Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 61:1, as well as portions we have come to recognize are about the Messiah like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 110:1-4.

II. What Did Jesus Do? V. 21-22

- A. The answer to the question in this section is given by way of prophecy. Jesus predicted some events that were going to happen shortly.
- B. Though not for public consumption yet, thus Jesus told His disciples not to say anything about it to others, He was preparing them for what was about to come.
- C. He explained that the “Son of Man” had to suffer many things, including to be rejected by the religious leaders in Israel and murdered, and then raised again.
- D. His suffering is the pattern for the godly of all ages who also suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12; see also 1 Thess. 2:15, 2 Thess. 1:4, 2 Tim. 3:10-12, Rev. 12:13; and other 200 other verses that mention persecution).
- E. God designed that the actions of the wicked who killed Jesus, unaware though they were of what they were doing, implemented His plan to offer Christ as a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:12, Isaiah 53:10).

III. What Should I Do About This? V. 23-26

- A. Jesus tells us what to do. First, ask yourself if you desire to be connected to Jesus.
- B. If so, deny yourself. Denying yourself means setting aside your selfish interests and putting yourself last. By implication, then, if you deny yourself, you embrace others or other things. You dedicate yourself to serve Christ, to love others, and even to suffer for Him.
- C. Take up the cross. This followership extends even to the point of death. The cross was an instrument of death, meaning you had such a total commitment that you would die for Jesus if you had to do so. With such

a charge perhaps portending the end of your life, doing lesser things for Jesus is relatively easy. The cross does *not* consist of various trials that are common in our lives. Rather, the cross has to do with difficulties, persecutions, and martyrdom specifically tied to following Jesus.

- D. Follow Jesus. This command uses the verb from which we get the word *acolyte*. That word can mean an assistant or follower. It is typically used in ritualistic church contexts, but I am using the word here only to illustrate the idea that Christians are assistants to and followers of Jesus.
- E. Paradoxically, those who make every effort to keep their lives to themselves will lose their lives in the end. Such a self-centered project will certainly fail. But the one who voluntarily “loses” his life now for Jesus, giving what remains of it to Him will find that he has saved his life in the long run for a significant temporal meaning *and* eternal destiny.
- F. There is absolutely no profit in being the richest person in the world if you are going to lose your life in the end. You leave all worldly things behind—possessions, money, fame, power, etc.—and so the things you pursued are lost, and you yourself are also lost in eternal darkness because you did not receive the light.
- G. Think forward to when the Jesus returns in glory. He will not face more suffering then—only honor and victory. Jesus compares His response to you with your treatment of Jesus. This is like Matthew 10:32-33. To those who find Jesus embarrassing and do not want to be associated with Him, He will likewise find them embarrassing to Him and not want to be associated with them. This is what it means in verse 25 that someone would be destroyed or lost. They loved the world and were ashamed to be associated with Jesus, and that will result in a bad final judgment.

Conclusion

Christians happily acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord:

“We do not preach ourselves but **Christ Jesus as Lord**” (2 Cor. 4:5).

“No one can say that **Jesus is Lord** except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**” (Phil. 2:11).

“If you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

That is what Christians do. We do not quibble about whether He is Lord because He *is*. Instead, we try to learn how we can best **follow Him** and

best love Him and keep His commands and learn His teachings and implement them in our daily lives. We know by this that our lives will be better, the world will be better, Christ will be pleased, and we will get good marks at our final judgment at His throne.

Geldenhuys comments on p. 275 of his commentary on Luke: “The final result of our preaching and work should always be that people are brought to the personal confession that Jesus is the Christ of God—the Messiah who is our Prophet, Priest, and King, our Saviour and Teacher, who has procured redemption for us and who now intercedes for us and rules our lives. All this is included in the fact that He is the Christ, the Lord’s Anointed.”

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