

EVERY KNEE SHOULD BEND

Matthew 16:13-17

Hebrews 1:1-6

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Anne Graham Lotz tells of her mother, Ruth Graham, being invited to a prestigious dinner party in London, England. The glittering affair included members of the royal family as well as aristocrats from British society. Mrs. Graham was intrigued by the distinguished gentleman sitting beside her who was the former head of Scotland Yard. She asked many questions about Scotland Yard. The gentleman told her of the different departments such as forgery and counterfeiting. She commented that he must have spent a lot of time studying counterfeit signatures. He corrected her, *“On the contrary, Mrs. Graham, I spent all of my time studying the genuine thing. That way when I saw a counterfeit, I could immediately detect it.”*

In the church, **WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE GENUINE THING.** There are a lot of counterfeits out in the world that claim to be of ultimate importance in life. The church believes Jesus alone is of ultimate importance and salvation comes through him. So we study Jesus and we worship him.

Before there was a church, people were trying to figure out just who Jesus was. One day Jesus asked his disciples, *“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”* Disciples answered, *“Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”* People had seen Jesus heal the sick and even raise the dead. People had heard the profound teaching of Jesus. People had seen the love and authority of Jesus. Consequently, many thought he was one of the great prophets, Elijah or Jeremiah, who had come back to life. Then Jesus asked the most important question, *“But who do you say I am?”* Peter answered, not only for himself, but for all the disciples and the church to come. He said, *“You are the messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

Jesus’ question is asked of all of us. Who do YOU say Jesus is?

It doesn’t matter who your parents said Jesus was.

It doesn’t matter who your friends say Jesus is.

It doesn’t matter who the teacher or the preacher say Jesus is.

None of us can piggyback on the faith of someone else. What matters is what it is in your heart -who you say Jesus is. For who we say Jesus is will determine how we live.

Now for most of us, we made a profession of faith of who we thought Jesus was in a church sanctuary in front of a congregation, but the true indication of faith in Jesus is how we live in the world.

THE PROFESSION OF JESUS IS REVEALED IN A WORLD OF COMPETING GODS

Peter's confession took place at Caesarea Philippi, over 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It had been a place of religious significance for hundreds of years. The settlement was established at a sacred spring where a Canaanite god had long been worshiped. When the Greeks conquered the area, they made it a shrine of the god Pan and called the town Paneas. The town was renamed Caesarea by the Jewish King, Herod the Great, after he built a temple to Caesar Augustus.

It is no coincidence that Jesus asked for a profession of faith from his followers in a land where other gods had been worshiped for centuries. In the shadow of a temple where Caesar Augustus was proclaimed to be the Son of God, the disciples of Jesus proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Such a profession was in defiance of the claims of mighty Rome and its Caesar. In this place where many gods were worshiped, the church proclaimed that Jesus alone was the Son of God.

We too are challenged to make that profession, not in the comfort of a church sanctuary, but in the country of other gods. Gordon MacDonald tells the story of a Christian friend of his who was a businessman working on a deal to acquire major property which had the potential for significant financial gain. Now this man had previously made a commitment to Christian mission, so his business deal was going to hedge in on his time and energy for his mission. One day this man was on an airplane and across the aisle was the head of a US government agency which dealt with the very business he was considering getting in to. He told the man about the business opportunity and also about his mission commitment. He asked him if there was any way he saw that he could do both. The government official replied, *"It seems to me that you are standing on a mountaintop, and this is your temptation."* Gordon's friend recognized the man's reference to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness to have all the nations if only he bowed down to the devil. He said to Gordon, *"The minute he said that, I knew I was being asked to bow down to someone. The only question was to whom? Jesus or the other guy?"*

We all are faced with the temptation to bow down to gods in order to get what we want. We are tempted to bow down to the god of money, the god of power, the god of approval, the god of appearances, the god of addictions, the god of materialism, the god of sports - just to name a few.

So we have to decide, are we going to bow down to those gods or will we bow down to Jesus, the Son of the living God.

If we are going to be a Christian, we have to bow down to Jesus alone. “No one can serve to masters,” Jesus said. We have to choose, Jesus or that other guy. After the artist Thorwaldsen had completed his famous statue of Christ, he brought a friend to see it. Christ’s arms were outstretched, his head bowed between them. The friend said, *‘But I cannot see his face.’* the sculptor replied, *“If you want to see the face of Christ, you must get on your knees.”*

Only Jesus is the Son of the living God. He is the Way, the Truth and the Light. No one comes to the heavenly Father but through him. We must bow before him alone in submission and worship.

Paul wrote of the way it should be. *“Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is **above every name**, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*