

Why did Jesus come?

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[0 : 00] The best-selling author and journalist, Douglas Murray, has recently released his new book, *The Madness of Crowds*. And in it, Murray examines the 21st century's most divisive issues, and he would regard these as being sexuality, gender, technology, and race.

And what he does in his book is he reveals the new culture wars that are playing out in our universities and in our workplaces, in our schools and in our homes, all in the name of social justice and all in the name of identity politics and what he calls intersectionality.

And he says that we've been living through a period in which the grand narratives of the past, which people have based their lives on, namely religion and politics, he's saying that these grand narratives have essentially collapsed.

And because they've collapsed, he's saying there's a vacuum, and so into this vacuum, new ideas have begun to creep in. And all of these new ideas have the intention of giving meaning to people's lives, providing explanations, if you like, as to how things are the way they are.

And it's a provocative book, and it's one in which he seeks to make sense of this culture, our culture's most complicated issues.

[1 : 31] And he concludes his book by saying this, he says, In an era without purpose, and in a universe without clear meaning, this call to politicise everything and then fight for it has an undoubted attraction.

It fills life with meaning of a kind. But of all the ways in which people can find meaning in their lives, politics, let alone politics on such a scale, is one of the unhappiest.

Politics may be an important part of our lives, but as a source of personal meaning, it is disastrous. What he's saying is that people are looking to the cultural issues of the day to make sense of their lives and give their lives meaning.

And so he goes on, he says, One of the ways to distance ourselves from the madness of our times is to retain an interest in politics, but not to rely on it as a source of meaning. The call should be for people to simplify their lives and not to mislead themselves by devoting their lives to a theory that answers no questions, makes no predictions, and is easily falsifiable.

So, Douglas Murray, he highlights the problems, but ultimately he doesn't really give the answer. He does highlight the fact that the biggest issues in our culture today are what people regard as being, things that give them meaning.

[2 : 56] So the search for meaning comes from being involved in all of these big issues. And of course we know that people have always searched for meaning in their lives.

As long as they have been human beings, people have searched for meaning and purpose. And yet the universe and how we fit into it is most clearly understood, not by the current cultural issues of our day, but by a look at the person of Jesus Christ.

That's what Mark wants us to do in his gospel. He wants us to look at Jesus Christ to see who he is, so that we might discover how the universe was made, what the universe is for, and how we as human beings fit into it.

That's why Mark begins his gospel by saying these words. In Mark chapter 1, verse 1, if you look down, he says the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

So what he's doing is he's saying, because of who Jesus is, the good news about Jesus impacts everybody and everything.

[4 : 07] And so life is never going to make sense or have meaning, he's saying, without reference to Jesus Christ. And that's why Mark wants to introduce us to the real Jesus in his gospel.

Now the gospel of Mark was the first gospel ever written, so it's the closest in time to when Jesus actually lived. And so we are able, through what he says, to take a careful look at Jesus Christ for ourselves, to see who he is and to see why he matters.

And so the gospel of Mark is for everybody, whether you call yourself a Christian or not. We need to look at the most influential and most significant character in the whole of human history, namely Jesus Christ.

And so after Mark's introduction, which we looked at last week, today we see that Jesus appears on the scene for the first time. Now, as a writer, Mark has got a particular style.

All writers do. And his work is fast-paced and it's to the point. And so he uses an economy of words, which means everything he mentions is significant.

[5 : 17] He only takes a small amount of space to say a lot. And so in just five verses about the baptism and about the temptation of Jesus, Mark helps us to see how Jesus gives meaning and significance to this world and our place in it.

Essentially, Jesus, God's son, has come on a mission to save us. Let me say that again.

Essentially, what he's saying here is that Jesus, God's son, has come into this world on a mission to save.

And so we'll see this as we consider three points. And they are, first of all, who Jesus is, second, why Jesus came, and third, what it means. So look at those together.

First, who Jesus is, second, why Jesus came, and then third, what it means. First of all, who Jesus is. So first of all, the identity of Jesus is confirmed by God at Jesus' baptism.

So let's look again at verse 9 to 11. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

[6 : 37] And the voice came from heaven, You are my son whom I love. With you I am well pleased. Okay, so the baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry, the beginning of his mission.

And you notice there was a supernatural event. God speaks directly from heaven to identify Jesus as his son with whom he is well pleased.

And so Jesus' baptism is an event of cosmic significance. And three things happen to identify Jesus as God's chosen king who has come into the world.

First, the heavens are torn open. Second, the Spirit descends like a dove. And then third, the voice of God comes from heaven.

So in these three things, in the baptism of Jesus, you notice that all three persons of the Trinity are involved. So the Christian belief is that there is one God in three persons.

[7 : 45] God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And so we're being told that this is a significant moment as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are working together in what is going on.

Because God is implementing the next stage of his great salvation plan. God is identifying Jesus as his son by saying, You are my son whom I love.

With you I am well pleased. Now the language that's said here is reminiscent of the Old Testament part of the Bible. And so the voice of God, the Father from heaven, is the assurance of his approval of Jesus for his mission.

And so Mark's readers, who would be more familiar with the Old Testament part of the Bible than we would be, Mark's readers knew that God's people, Israel, nation, God's people were often referred to as God's Son.

But they were a son who was unfaithful and disobedient. And yet here, God is speaking about the one true son who would be faithful and who would be obedient to his Father.

[9 : 02] And so there's the assurance of the Father and then there's the empowering of the Spirit. And that tells us that Jesus would not only speak and act for God, but as God in this world.

And that's exactly what we see as we move on to the next stage of Mark's Gospel. There's plenty evidence to show that Jesus wasn't just an ordinary human being, but Jesus is really God's King, working with God's power and authority on this earth.

God with us. So God is speaking here and he wants the world to listen. Because the work of God, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit here in the baptism of Jesus, remind us of what happened way back at the creation of the universe.

So what's happening in the baptism of Jesus is an echo of what God did at the beginning of history. Because the creation was a project of the triune God.

So at the start of the Bible, way back in Genesis chapter 1, there's God and there's God's word. God speaks and the world is made and there's God's spirit hovering over the waters.

[10:25] And here, in the baptism of Jesus, we see the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working again. So there's the Father who's the voice, there's the Son, the Word, he's often called, and there's the Spirit who is fluttering like a dove.

And so Mark is showing us that this is an echo of the creation of the world, the beginning of history. So just as the triune God worked at the creation of the world, so he's saying the triune God is at work again in the recreation of the world.

So the renewal and the restoration of all things has begun with the arrival of Jesus Christ in this world. So in Jesus' baptism, God is announcing that Jesus is the one who will bring about his salvation.

Salvation for the cosmos, but also for individual people like you and like me. So for all eternity before this, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit existed together, and now we see God the Son entering into this world, our world, on a mission.

And so if he is whom our claims he is, God the Son, then we can't mistake his identity. I wonder if you've ever been in a case of mistaken identity.

[11:53] I have. A few years ago, I was involved in mistaken identity. We were on holiday in Majorca. It was sunny. We were reading by the pool. And I was mistaken for Ronan Keating.

I don't. Now, Ronan Keating, if you didn't know, Ronan Keating's most famous for being in the boy band Boyzone. He was the lead singer.

But at the time, my identity was mistaken for being his. He was on the X Factor, which is bad TV, basically. And so, when we were on holiday, I wondered why, as we sat by the pool and read our books and the children played in the water, I wondered why this bunch of girls over in one corner kept looking at me just the whole time, staring at me.

And then in the evening, in the restaurant, that night, one of them came up to me and said that they were arguing all day about whether I was actually Ronan Keating or not. And they were disappointed when they were all.

Clearly, I wasn't. And yet, they still wanted to take selfies with me and send them to their friends. Now, the point is, it doesn't matter if they get a human being's identity wrong, does it?

[13:06] I mean, I was quite pleased that it was compared to Ronan Keating, even though I'm nothing like him, especially my singing. But the point is, we can't really get Jesus' identity wrong.

We need to get the identity of Jesus right. And that's why Mark is so clear in expressing to us who Jesus is, so that we don't miss him.

And so the baptism and the temptation, as we'll see, are telling us this man, Jesus, is a big deal. He's come into the world. We must listen to him.

So that's the first point, who Jesus is. The second is, why Jesus came? Because we get big news as to Jesus' purpose, or Jesus' mission in this world, from his baptism and his temptation.

So his baptism, first of all, why was Jesus baptized by John? Mark doesn't explain his economy of words. He doesn't say much. Because, it's strange, Jesus didn't need a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, which is what's there in verse 4.

[14:11] He didn't need that. And so why was he baptized by John? Well, it seems to be that Jesus is here identifying with our human condition.

He is God, but he became a man, putting on flesh and bones to identify with us. And so Jesus doesn't need to have his sins forgiven, but he came for people who do.

And so his coming into the world is Jesus coming to stand where sinners stand, to, if you like, put himself in our shoes to be one of us.

And yet, he was one of us without sin. And so the Son of God identified fully with our human condition from his birth right through to his death.

And so we get an insight into his purpose in coming into this world. Because it's one of a number of clues that explain his mission. So by standing in the Jordan as Jesus was being baptized, that was the place where repentant Jews stood and were washed and cleansed because of their sins, Jesus was saying he came to stand where we stand, to be the one who stood in the place of sinners.

[15 : 32] And so just as he let that water be poured over him by John, soon blood would be spilled out from his body for human beings like you and me.

He's the one who would truly wash away our sins through his death on the cross. In other words, God's son humbles himself, he enters into our world, he takes on our humanity so that he can die in order to save us.

So right here in the baptism of Jesus, the cross is looming over his baptism because he's being launched into his mission, the purpose for which he came, which was to die on a cross.

So just as his baptism points to his mission and his purpose when he came, so does his temptation. So let's look at that again in verse 12 and 13.

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness and he was in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and the angels attended him.

[16 : 43] So straight after the Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism, the Spirit then sends Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

And there's a sense of immediacy here. So Mark says at once, the word behind at once is one he uses over 42 times.

And it's scattered all the way through these only chapters and it's translated in different ways. So at once or immediately or without delay again and again Mark is communicating a sense of urgency here that Jesus is a man on mission with a job to do and he's getting on and he's doing it.

So it's a mission that not only involved him identifying with our humanity so that he could die for our sins but it's a mission that involved him engaging in battle and in conflict with Satan the devil so that he could defeat him.

Satan the word literally means adversary. So Jesus here is going into battle against Satan in the wilderness. But like his baptism Jesus' temptation also tells us why he came.

[18 : 02] And the symbolism here wouldn't have been missed by Mark's readers who were familiar with the Old Testament part of the Bible because again what he says here echoes the creation story.

So there's the creation story in Genesis 1 if you're familiar the spirit moves over the face of the waters then God speaks the world into being and then human beings are created remember Adam and Eve and then history begins.

But then what happens next? straight after the creation. Well along comes Satan the snake and he tempts the first human beings Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

And now here just as Jesus enters the scene to begin his mission we see the same pattern again. So at his baptism he comes up out of the water and the spirit descends on him then God speaks and what happens next?

Along comes Satan and tempts Jesus in the wilderness. It's the same thing. So the spirit moves God speaks Satan appears and temptation comes.

[19 : 16] The whole scene of Jesus' baptism and temptation echoes the original creation story. And so what we're meant to see here is a moment of monumental significance.

we're meant to note the similarities but we're also meant to note the differences as well because while Satan tempted Adam in a beautiful perfect garden the Garden of Eden at the creation Jesus here is tempted you notice in the wilderness.

Mark draws attention to this by noting that Jesus was with the wild animals he says. Seems like an odd thing to mention doesn't it? Small detail.

And Mark is the only gospel writer who mentions that Jesus is with the wild animals. Now why does he do this? It's because the perfect creation that he's echoing back to is no longer perfect.

We no longer live in the Garden of Eden. So Jesus entered into a world that's been spoiled by sin. That's why Jesus wasn't tempted in a perfect garden like Adam who ruled over the animals.

[20 : 29] Instead Jesus is tempted in the wilderness with the wild animals because we live in a fallen, a broken, a spoiled and a disintegrating world that is a consequence of Adam's sin and disobedience.

And we are well aware of that aren't we? Our world is not as it should be. Our lives are not as they should be. Right from the creation all the way down to us as individual human beings we know there's something up or something wrong.

And the reason is it's because the creation has fallen. We don't live in the world that God intended to force. This creation that we live in needs to be renewed and it needs to be restored.

And that's why Jesus came. And so that's the first point who Jesus is. The second why Jesus came and the third what it means. Because Jesus came to be what Paul in the Bible called the last Adam or the second Adam.

So Jesus the last Adam came to undo what the first Adam had done. So where Adam in the Garden of Eden had listened to Satan and had disobeyed God and the result was a fallen creation and separation from God.

[21 : 55] Jesus came refusing to listen to Satan but obeyed God and the result would be a renewed creation and reconciliation with God.

Basically Adam had failed the test in the Garden but Jesus Christ came to pass the test. Not just there in the wilderness darkness but again in the Garden of Gethsemane just before he died on a cross because Adam failed to obey God and if we're honest we know that we failed to obey God too and so we deserve God's just punishment for our disobedience and yet Jesus God's son came on a mission to save us and that's why only Jesus gives meaning and purpose and significance to our lives in this universe.

Only Jesus makes sense of how things are. Listen to what G.K. Chesterton a writer once said he said if I found a key on the road and discovered it fit and opened a particular lock at my house I would assume most likely that the key was made by the lock maker and if I find a set of teachings set out in pre-modern oriental society that has proven itself of such universal validity that it has fascinated and satisfied millions of people in every century including the best minds in history and the simplest hearts that it has made itself a home in virtually every culture inspired masterpieces of beauty in every field of art continues to grow rapidly and spread and assert itself in lands where a century ago the name of Jesus was not even heard if such teaching so obviously fits the locks of so many human souls in so many times and in so many places are they likely to be the work of a deceiver or a fool in fact it is more likely that they were designed by the heart maker so God didn't give up on humanity way back in the garden thank goodness for that but God had a plan to send Jesus Christ and Jesus came and he lived the perfect life the life that we could never live a life without sin and Jesus died the death that we deserve to die death for our sin and so Jesus entered into this fallen and broken world to become one of us a human so that he could die for us on a cross and defeat Satan and sin and death and restore our broken relationship with God and so the God of all eternity Father Son and Holy Spirit welcomes us himself to share in his life and experience his love he doesn't need us but he welcomes us to come to him that we might enjoy that love that exists between those three persons of the Trinity God

Father Son and Spirit and this is the best news ever because it gives meaning to everything it makes sense of our lives it makes sense of our world and at the centre of it all is the person of Jesus Christ who he is and why he came let's pray higher and cheers and the taking back to all us