

Who is Jesus?

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[0 : 00] So what I want to do is really open up what Mark's Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, says about Jesus and ask the question, who is Jesus? Who is Jesus?

Because everybody will have an answer to that question, who is Jesus? Is he a Galilean carpenter? Is he a great teacher? Is he a miracle worker? Is he a religious reformer?

Is he a social revolutionary? Is he God himself come down to earth as a man? Who is Jesus? Think about that question. It's a question that we need to think about and that we need to answer.

Who is the real Jesus? And how can we be sure? How can we know for certain? Well, we need to ask it because Jesus transcends the world of religion and he transcends the world of church because he impacts every single sphere of study.

Jesus has always influenced culture and he continues to do so today. So, for example, just over a year ago, the National Geographic printed on its cover various artworks of Jesus and the main article inside is the search for the real Jesus and it looks at how archaeology helps us understand a bit more about the life of Jesus.

[1 : 22] Not by people who have a Christian faith per se, but by people who really want to get down to the facts on who this person Jesus was. Did he exist?

What did he do? Where did he live? And what was he like? And just recently, US rapper Kanye West, if you know who he is, he's the husband of Kim Kardashian West.

I think his wife is maybe more famous than him. Apparently, his new album is set to drop next week. And the title of that album is Jesus is King.

Jesus is King. That's the title of his new album. You heard it here first. Jesus is King. You'll see it and you can download it on iTunes if you really want. So what I'm saying is Jesus is just as popular.

He's just as controversial. But also, he's just as misunderstood as ever. And that's why we need to ask this question, who is Jesus? Because we can't just dismiss the most famous person and the most influential person who has ever lived in the history of this world.

[2 : 28] You can't just dismiss him. And so if we want to understand the world and we want to understand our place in it, then we need to understand Jesus Christ.

Because his identity and his purpose have meaning and significance on a cosmic scale, as well as for you and for me as individual people.

So there are people today who will be convinced about who Jesus is. But not everyone. And if that's the case, then we're glad that you're here.

We're glad that you've made it along to church. Because we want to start a new church for people to come and explore and investigate who Jesus Christ is and why he matters.

So we're glad that you've joined us. And we trust that you'll stay with us. And you'll discover, as Tom discovered when he told you, that Jesus changes people's lives. He transforms people.

[3 : 26] And they're never the same again. So an encounter with Jesus is life-changing. So what we're going to do is to investigate the person of Jesus by looking at the Gospel of Mark in your Bible, or one of these which you can take home after church today.

Mark is the shortest account of the life of Jesus. You could read this in probably 40, 45 minutes. And it was written around the late AD 50s.

So it's the earliest account that we have of the person Jesus Christ. So it was written within a lifetime of eyewitnesses who had seen the events that Mark describes.

They'd seen his life, his death, and his resurrection. And so it was very hard in those days to make stuff up. Because there were people around at the time who were there when these events happened.

So I could say today a massive pink elephant with purple spots jumped around Annie's land at 3.40 on Sunday the 22nd of September 2019.

[4 : 33] But, 20 years time, that would never be a credible story. Because there's enough people to say, that just didn't happen. And so Mark's Gospel was written close enough to the events that it describes to verify all these eyewitnesses were around.

And they can say, I was there. I saw these things. These things happened. This man, Mark, is not making these things up. So when we read the Gospel of Mark, we can be sure that we are close to the historical Jesus.

And so Mark wants to introduce us to him by inviting us to ask the question, who is Jesus? So what I'd like to do, and the remainder of the time that we've got left, is just look at these verses together.

Three simple points. First, the real Jesus. Second, the revealed Jesus. And then third, the response to Jesus. The real Jesus, the revealed Jesus, and then the response to Jesus.

So first of all, the real Jesus. Look down. Mark chapter 1, verse 1. What does he say? The beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

[5 : 40] Boom! Mark wastes no time explaining who Jesus is. He gets straight to the point by making this staggering claim about him.

He says that Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ, the footnote says, the Son of God. Now the word Christ isn't a surname. It's more of a title, like doctor, or prime minister, or president.

And so Jesus, the Messiah, or Christ, means God's anointed king, or God's chosen king. So Jesus is the one who came to bring God's rule on earth, this earth, and to rescue people.

So Mark is telling us that Jesus is the king. Not just a king, but the king. The ultimate king. And he goes further. Mark also claims that Jesus is the Son of God.

So again, he is not mincing his words in this monumental claim. It's a claim of outright divinity. He's saying Jesus is no ordinary human being.

[6 : 45] Jesus is the Son of God. And because he's the Son of God, that's why Mark wants to introduce Jesus to us. Because if Jesus is the Messiah, if he is the Son of God who has come, then this undisputed fact is the most important news that the world could ever hear.

That's why Mark calls it the good news about Jesus. The word he uses here, gospel, good news, was used for major events. So not just like small news, but major news.

Not news like Don Ferdinand beat Partick Thistle 3-0 yesterday. Nobody cares. But this is news like somebody special has come.

It's like the news that would happen whenever there was a major military victory or there was the birth of a new emperor. News news, big news, important news, life changing news for everybody.

That's what Mark is saying here. Something significant has happened in this person, Jesus, I'm talking about. And it means life can never, ever be the same again for anybody.

[8 : 00] And so Mark wants us to be in no doubt about the world impacting significance of Jesus Christ. And so that's why we should never think, when we think about Christianity, that Christianity is simply good news about how to live.

That you should do this list of things and you shouldn't do that list of things. As if it's good advice. What he's saying is, it's not a list of rules about do's and don'ts.

But it is fundamentally good news about a person. That person is Jesus and I'm claiming he is the Christ, the King, the Son of God.

And that's why, don't you think, if this is true, that we've got to pay attention to Jesus Christ. It means we can't just walk away thinking that this has got nothing to do with me.

It's got everything to do with us. Jesus coming impacts everybody and everything. And so we shouldn't miss the real Jesus. So that's the first point.

[9 : 00] The points are short, so don't panic. The first point, the real Jesus. The second point, the revealed Jesus. And we see this in verse 2 to 8. Mark goes on to show us how Jesus is already been promised by God.

And so Jesus is part of a far bigger plan of God's. That's why he grinds the good news about Jesus in the hope for God's people. So just look at verse 2 and 3.

I'll read them. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way. A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight paths for him. So what he's doing is he's revealing something significant here about the identity of Jesus. He's quoting this text from the Old Testament part of the Bible, from the book of Isaiah.

And it's a text about God. And he's saying that John the Baptist, who Mark is going to come to, and so will we, John the Baptist is a messenger and he prepares the way.

[10 : 06] He is the voice, John the Baptist, the voice calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord. And so if John is the one who is preparing the way for the Lord, then Mark is saying that Jesus is the Lord that Isaiah is talking about.

So he's making another amazing claim here. And it's a big deal for Mark's readers and it's a big deal for us because he's identifying the Lord God Almighty in Isaiah with Jesus.

He's emphatically saying that Jesus is the God Isaiah is referring to. In other words, he's saying that God has come down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's why it's the kind of news that means things can never be the same again. And so Mark reveals Jesus is part of God's plan, not just for the people of Israel, but for the whole wide world, including you and me.

Jesus is the king and he's the fulfillment of all that God had promised would happen. So long before Jesus came, God revealed Jesus as rescuer and he revealed Jesus as king.

[11 : 29] So Jesus would come and he would rule and he would renew the entire universe. He would judge as well as save. And so that's why we just can't ignore Jesus Christ.

Because if Jesus has been revealed to us as God, and Mark says he has, then do you know what it means? It means the guessing games about God are over in Jesus.

Because God has revealed himself to us, showing us what he is like in Jesus. And that's an absolute bombshell, isn't it?

It means there's no point speculating and there's no point debating and there's no point arguing about the existence of God. Because if you want to see God and if you want to know God, then you can see him and know him in Jesus Christ.

Bertrand Russell, who was one of the 20th century's prominent atheists, so think what he was then to what Richard Dawkins would be today.

[12 : 36] And somebody once asked Bertrand Russell, he said, what will you do, Mr. Russell, if after you die you find out there is a God? What will you say to him? And then Russell replied, he said, I will tell him he did not give me enough evidence.

And yet Mark is showing us that God has given us enough evidence. In fact, it would be intellectual dishonesty for someone to say that God doesn't exist and make that claim or that God is irrelevant if they've never ever looked into the person of Jesus Christ.

So, in other words, you can't say, I've lived a balanced life. I'm an intellectual person. I've read well on Wikipedia and the internet, wherever else.

I've got a lot of knowledge about a lot of things, but I just know God doesn't exist. Have you looked into Jesus Christ? I don't need to. I just know God doesn't exist. You can't really do that.

You can't adopt the position if you've never investigated Jesus for yourself. Because he is the single most influential person who has ever lived. So there's no doubt that Jesus Christ lived in history.

[13 : 51] There's far too much evidence to reach any other conclusion. Not just from the Gospel writers like Mark, but from the many historians of the day. Historians like Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus and Pliny.

I'm not going to quote them all. But they were around at the time and they wrote about the existence of this man, Jesus. They all affirm it. And so if God became human in Jesus Christ, then this history making and earth shattering and universe altering and life transforming news sets Christianity apart from every other religion, every other philosophy, every other belief there has ever been.

Which is why Mark tells us that John the Baptist was getting people ready for the coming of Jesus. So the turning point in human history was coming in the coming of Jesus.

And so John had to get people ready. And that's what he's doing there, verse 4 and 5. Just read those with me. And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the river Jordan. So here's John.

[15 : 12] Through his preaching and through his baptizing in the wilderness, was preparing people, getting them ready for the coming of Jesus. So John's message was in line with Jesus' message.

John was telling people to repent for the forgiveness of their sins. Repentance means a change of mind. Change of mind which then results in a change of lifestyle or behavior.

And so John is calling his people to this. And the baptism in the river Jordan was a symbolic act of the washing away of sin from the people.

And so John was getting people ready for what Jesus was coming to do. And so read with me verse 6 to verse 8. John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist.

And he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message. After me comes the one more powerful than I am. The straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

[16 : 12] I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. So this man John, he couldn't actually forgive sins. Only Jesus can do that.

And so in contrast with John's water baptism, he's saying Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. He's saying that Jesus won't just bring forgiveness for people's sins, but Jesus would fill them with God's Holy Spirit and that would transform and change their lives.

Just like you heard earlier with our friend Tom. Because that's what the real Jesus does. He's in the business of transforming people's lives.

Not just people way back then in Bible times, but people today. People like you and like me. So get this. A Jesus that isn't the real Jesus, a Jesus made up in our imaginations, who isn't real, will never change anybody.

Will never alter anyone's life. Only the real Jesus, God's King, can change anyone. And that's why he came. Jesus came to deal with our sins that separate us from God and deserve his judgment.

[17 : 27] And he does that through his death on the cross. And that's what the Gospel of Mark is moving towards. Because Mark's account of Jesus is presented to us in two parts.

So the first part, in chapters 1 to 8, Mark wants to announce the identity of Jesus as supreme king over all, with the power and authority over sickness and sin and disease and even death itself.

And then the second part of the Gospel of Mark, chapter 9 to 16, he wants to present to us the servant king, the king who gave up his life and died.

And it's through his death and his subsequent resurrection that are the very heart of the good news about him. So there's the real Jesus, verse 1.

There's the revealed Jesus, verse 2 to 8. And as I close, just let's think about the response to Jesus. Because this good news of Jesus is astounding.

[18 : 30] Nobody could make this kind of stuff up. That Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, God himself, has come to us so that we can get back to him.

That's why Jesus Christ demands a response. So if this God came as king in order to die on a cross for you, then how should you respond to him?

How should I respond to him? The only right response is to bow before this king, to acknowledge him as king and to look to him in our need, to trust him as our saviour.

The wrong response would be to walk away from him thinking he is irrelevant to my life, he's got nothing to do with me, I don't need him. And so you may be here today and you're thinking, wait a minute, I just walked in the door this afternoon, about an hour ago, and I wasn't even sure about God at all.

And now you're telling me that I can know him through Jesus Christ. You can't expect me to believe this, can you? You can't expect a rational 21st century post-modern, a post-post-modern person who is intelligent and smart, who's got a degree to believe that this is true.

[19 : 53] If that's you, then do you know what? All the original readers of the Gospel of Mark were Jews. And they had far more intellectual and cultural and social barriers to believing in Jesus than you do.

Because it was unthinkable and unbelievable that the Lord God Almighty for a Jew would stoop down, enter this world, become a man, and then die on a cross.

That was inconceivable. And so if you think you've got issues when it comes to believing in Jesus, they had far more. And that's why Mark's aim in his Gospel, and that's why our mission as a new church is to help people see Jesus for who he is.

Because Mark gives us here enough evidence so that we can make up our minds for ourselves and we can respond to him. Because we can't come into contact with the real Jesus and remain neutral.

Because if God has revealed himself in Jesus, then we just can't avoid him forever.
Because later in Mark, he's telling us that Jesus will return again.

[21 : 11] And so Jesus is the most conclusive proof, not just that God exists, but that God made us, that God loves us, and that God wants to enter into a relationship with us.

Jesus is the king who came to die. He said, he did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And so if the good news about Jesus Christ isn't the best news that you've ever heard in your life, then it could be that you have misunderstood the person of Jesus.

And so, do you know the real Jesus? Please take time to investigate him for yourself. You've got absolutely nothing to lose in looking into the most significant person who's ever lived in the history of the world.

And you've got so much, so much to gain. That's it for me to be for you to continue to allow me you and uh you and I'll■■■■ Secretary on the righty's hand by