

Jesus' Identity

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray now as we meditate a bit on God's Word together. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you that you speak and that you speak loudly and clearly in your Word. Please, this morning, help us to hear you and to live appropriately.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. We may or may not know it, but there is a bit of a plan in our preaching here at church. And the plan is to have a diet of Old Testament and Gospel and New Testament and some topics.

That's the way we try and work our way through the preaching program year by year. And the reason for this is that we want to preach the whole counsel of God, not just the bits that I want to hear or you want to hear, but that God would like us to hear. So He sets the agenda.

And it might take us a little while to get through each book, but generally we do. Eventually we do. And so last year we finished off the book of John. And this year we'll begin looking at the Gospel of Mark in our first term as we work our way up to Easter.

That's our plan at the moment. And the aim of this is to get better acquainted with Jesus. Now the reason is because our slogan says we want to present Christ to everyone and everyone mature in Christ.

[1 : 0 4] So we're better to start than a Gospel getting close to Jesus, getting to know Him better. And so can I encourage you to actually have a go at reading through the Gospel of Mark? I'm not quite sure what you did yesterday.

I wasted the day. I went for a ride into the city then came home and sat in the air conditioning and just did nothing and went to sleep. That's what I did. But you might want to actually spend an hour or so reading the Gospel of Mark.

Let me tell you, there's a really good little book I've found helpful. It's called Dig Deeper into the Gospels. It's a really helpful little, well it's not little, it's that big, but it's a really helpful book in actually understanding and thinking through what's going on.

And it's using Mark's Gospel as the book that works its way through. So it's very helpful. So, by way of a bit of a fun, I thought we'd start with a quiz.

I know the kids have gone back to school, so here we go back to school and to see how well we might know the book of Mark and Jesus himself a bit. So here's a bit of a quiz for you. Ready?

[2 : 0 4] So here we go. First question. Alright. You can't read it, but I'll say it. In the Gospel of Mark, who calls... You can talk to the person next to you, it's not on your own, you can talk to the person next to you, alright?

So here you go. In the Gospel of Mark, who calls Jesus the Christ or the Son of God? There you go. I mean, the Christ means King, Son of God means King, so the same kind of idea, alright?

So, who do you know in the Gospel of Mark calls Jesus the Christ? Okay, well, let's...

Oh, Peter. Peter does, yes. Yeah, your namesake. He puts his foot in a number of times, doesn't he? Yeah, that's it. Peter does. Yeah, good. Who else calls him?

Well, let's put the answers up on the screen. You just say pulling teeth a bit. Mark does. The bloke who wrote the book. Right at the very beginning there, calls him the Christ. There you go.

[3 : 0 7] Peter does. The Apostle Peter. The crowd calls him the Christ. There's a view of the Christ coming down from the cross. And the Holy Spirit calls him the...

God the Father calls him the Christ. Demons and unclean ones call him the Christ. And the centurion at the end says he was the Son of God.

So there you go. There's a few people that call him the Christ. Question two. Ready? Here we go. What things did Jesus say must happen to him? What are the things that Jesus said must happen to him?

All right. All right. Well, any brave volunteers?

Mark chapter 8 is. Mark chapter 8 is a key place. Well, here's the answer.

[4 : 07] Must be suffer. Must be rejected. Must be killed. And must rise again. The things that Jesus said must happen to him. Can you complete this sentence?

Are you ready? All right. Hopefully you can. If anyone would come after me, let him... Talk to the person next to you. What comes next? Okay.

The answer is... Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. That's what Jesus says. And then next question.

Can you complete this sentence? For even the Son of Man came to... Dot, dot, dot. Tell the person next to you. For even the Son of Man came not to...

Something, something, something. Something. Something. Something. Something. Something. I think you've got the idea.

[5 : 17] Not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Okay. Here's a... This is the last question, right? Last one.

Which of these is not in Mark's Gospel? Oh, the answers are up there. Go back. Oh, no. That's all right.

Which of these is not found in Mark's Gospel? All right. Here we go. Is the healing of the paralytic found in Mark's Gospel? Hmm.

What about the healing of the woman at the well? Healing of the woman at the well? No. That's John's Gospel. What about the parable of the sower?

Okay. That's all right. It's not there. The screen's too small. The parable of the sower? Yes. Yes. The parable of the sower is in all the Matthew, Mark and Luke. Not John.

[6 : 19] And what about this last one? The Lord's Prayer. Is the Lord's Prayer in Mark's Gospel? Who says it is? Who says it isn't? Who doesn't say?

Okay. The Lord's Prayer is not in Mark's Gospel. There you go. All right. So can I encourage you to have a read of Mark's Gospel and see if you can get a bit of a feel for it over the weeks ahead.

Let's go. All right. So let's press into Mark's chapter 1 to 15. This morning we're looking at Mark. And unlike Matthew and Luke, we don't have the account of Jesus' birth.

We just plunge straight in. You dive straight into the beginning of Jesus' ministry. You could divide Mark's Gospel into two sort of halves. Who is Jesus and why he came? Who is Jesus?

Chapters 1 to 8. Why he came? What did he come to do? Verses 9 and 16. However, in between it's all mixed up and matterless. That's not quite so tight as that one. Why he came?

[7 : 15] To suffer. Be rejected by the chief elders and the priests and the scribes. And to then rise again. But there are three great confessions in Mark's Gospel.

Start at the beginning, chapter 1, chapter 8 and chapter 15. So you have Mark's confession that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, he confesses that Jesus is the Christ.

Then you have Peter's confession in the middle of the book, Mark chapter 8. And then you have the centurion's confession when Jesus is at the cross. This man truly was the Son of God.

And as we come to this section, it's sections Mark bookend by the Gospel, announcing the Gospel and responding to the Gospel. That's what the bookends are, announcing the Gospel and then the idea of responding to the Gospel as Jesus starts to preach it.

Mark chapter 1, verse 1. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark chapter 1, verse 15. And Jesus says, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel.

[8 : 22] So let's talk about announcing the Gospel in verses 1 to 3. When the prophet John steps onto the stage and Jesus shortly after, it's a massive moment in world history.

When John begins his prophetic ministry in Mark 1, it's been a long time of waiting, of expectation. Israel's been waiting for God and His Kingdom, His promised King to come, while they're under foreign rule for a long time now.

When God would bring about His promised Kingdom, when the glory days of David and Solomon would come. That's been waiting for a long time now. And it's been about 400 years, in fact, since the close of the Old Testament and the prophetic preaching of Malachi, when Malachi spoke.

400 years of prophetic silence from God. No prophet speaking. Now you'll know that's about twice as long as Australia's been settled by Europeans. I don't know how long you've had to wait for something.

Expecting, waiting, it builds anticipation. I mean, kids are waiting for Christmas to come now, that's 12 months away. You might be waiting for an expected wedding to happen.

[9 : 27] Or expecting for, waiting for a child to be born. Or waiting for news of some kind. Waiting, expecting it to happen. Israel had been waiting for their Messiah, for the Kingdom of God to come, for a long time.

Looking for their Messiah to come, for over 400 years. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Waiting. And sadly, they still are waiting for their Messiah. They're waiting for a Kingdom to come.

And to have a Kingdom, you need a King, who will bring in the glory days of David and Solomon.

That's what they're waiting for. And Mark's Gospel begins by stating what he's writing.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So verse 1, this is the Gospel about Jesus Christ, God's Son. That's who it is. The Gospel means good news, you'll know that.

It's an announcement, it's a proclamation. It's the announcement of good news about Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. Now, I trust you've all had good news to announce at one stage.

[10 : 30] Maybe good news about a wedding, a child, successful surgery, a job, whatever. It gets posted on Facebook or TikTok or Snapchat or Instagram these days. This announcement is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus is the long-awaited Christ. Not a surname, it's a title. Not like saying Mr R Davidson.

It's more like Mr Roy, Senior Pastor. That's the idea. It's Jesus Christ, anointed King. That's who he is. And just to reinforce it, to underline by repetition in another way, it is Jesus, Son of God.

Which is the Old Testament's way of usually speaking about God's King for the Jews. Psalm 2 is a classic place to go to. The Son of God is the King that God sets on his throne.

So, the announcement's about Jesus, God's anointed King, King of Israel, King of the Jews. It's like saying, Jesus, King, King.

[11 : 34] That's what it's saying here. Doubling down on the fact that he's the King. And this good news was spoken about in Isaiah, over 700 years or so beforehand.

We've actually got two places in the Old Testament conflated. You see there the quote, as it's written in Isaiah, the prophet. It's conflating Malachi 3 and Isaiah 40.

Verse 2 quotes Malachi chapter 3. Behold, I'll send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. Now, that's addressing national Israel.

And then verse 3 quotes Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. It's addressing the people, the individual people, the Israelites to act.

It's saying, use, prepare. Use, make the path straight. You, plural, every one of you. You all. It's imperative, urgent.

[12 : 35] Prepare the way for the Lord. And Isaiah 40 is a wonderful part of the Bible, which promises that comfort is coming to Israel. I'll read out to you Isaiah 40, verse 1 and following.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she's received from the Lord's hand, double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40, verse 3. The announcement is that God's punishment for their sin is over.

deliverance is at hand. And this was spoken before the Assyrian exile even happened. And he's saying their time in the wilderness is over, even before they went into it.

And it's the Lord, capital L, little, capital R, little D, God himself who is coming to comfort and to forgive, to pardon Israel for her sins.

[14 : 00] When you see the Lord, like that, it's the personal name of Yahweh, the true and living God of Israel. And when you read Isaiah 40, it seems that the preparation for the Lord, God, is to be made in the wilderness.

As we read Mark 1, it reads as if one crying out is in the wilderness. And so both the preparation and the one preparing the people for the coming of the Lord is all happening in the wilderness, preparing the way for the King, which is exactly what we read in verse 4.

John appeared baptising where? In the wilderness. And proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John appears beside the River Jordan.

It's around 27, 28, something like that AD. It's the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. Not exactly sure where he was, but here's a bit of a map of the region to get an idea.

He's in that, they can see down there, sort of down in the purple zone, that's where he is, beside the Jordan River there, somewhere in the wilderness. That's where he is. And you can't help but feel the emphasis on the word wilderness.

[15 : 22] In verse 3 and 4, or later in verse 12, Jesus is driven into the wilderness, away from civilisation. Can you think of anything else about wilderness? A nation spent 40 years in the wilderness, enduring the judgement of God for their rebellion against him immediately after they'd been saved from their slavery in Egypt.

They'd wandered there for 40 years and then they'd entered the promised land as God brought them in. Entered the kingdom of God at one hand, if you like.

And John's proclaiming, crying out, preparing people for this day to come. Now we all make preparations for things we're expecting. Cyclone Curley was being spoken about a week ahead of making landfall.

Get ready, she's coming. The announcers are on the radio, that we're paying attention to the weather forecast, the governments were getting rescue boats in place. Everyone needs to know the cyclone is coming. Hard for anyone not to have known that Cyclone Curley was on the way. I'm pretty sure that most people in South East Queensland knew, and most of Australia knew, and had warning. You make preparations. Well, John 4, in verse 4, John appears proclaiming a baptism, a washing, a cleansing that comes from repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[16 : 51] Repentance is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Now repentance is a big thing. It's essentially a change of mind. That's what repentance is.

You once thought one way. You're now convinced that that was wrong, and you think another way. It's a turning away from the way of thinking and the way of living.

It's a conversion. That's what repentance is. It's a turning away from dead works. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1 says, it's the beginning of a new relationship with God.

It's submitting to God's way of living and not your own way of living. It's a massive change of heart, and it's an ongoing change of heart.

That's what repentance is. I'm going through a bit of repentance at the moment. It's hard. I'll tell you a bit about it. I'm trying, and I might be pretty slow at this, right, but I'm trying to change my attitude towards a speed limit on the road.

[17 : 58] You laugh if you like. Sinful Roy. Yeah, but you're right. It's a hard one. I'm trying to change my attitude to it and actually see that it's not a flexible rule, but a fixed rule, right?

And so, set my cruise control, call me a Pharisee, I don't know how to do it. But set my cruise control at the limit, not a couple of speed clicks above it, because I know that the car travels a bit faster, a bit slower than the speed, just set it at it, Roy.

There you go. I wonder what you are repenting of at the moment. I mean, that's important, what I'm talking about.

but I wonder what you might need, what I might need further to repent of at the moment. And he's saying a confession, there's a confession of sins going on there in verse 5.

And as the people hear the word of God and suddenly need to repent, they obey and they confess the sins they need to repent of.

[19 : 13] Let me tell you about sin. Sin is a rebellion against God's good and righteous rule, because he's the one who rules the kingdom. It's making myself the ruler of my own little kingdom.

I can set the speed limit on the road, thanks very much. I know the way is right. I am the one who lives in defiance of God, the king. And it'll work its way out in all kinds of ways, won't it?

Some public, some private. The way I think, the way I speak, the way I behave, the way I speak to the people around about me, the way I have attitude to all those around about me who God has made, the way I treat other people, the things I do, all symptoms of sin.

And sin is a deadly disease, and you need to be rid of it to be prepared for the kingdom of God to come. The people, the Jews, they need to be preparing the way for the Lord and John was leading them in that.

As they confessed their sins, they confessed their sins to God, they confessed their sins to John, and they would confess their sins, I take it, to one another and repented of them as John proclaimed the word of God.

[20 : 43] and the people who heard him were confessing their sins and repenting of them. And then they're washed outwardly as a sign that they were now clean inwardly and so ready for the

Lord to come.

The way was prepared because when the Lord comes, when he comes, it's a great day, it's a great and terrible day of both salvation for those who are waiting for him and prepared and judgment for those who are not.

I want to actually give us time now to take a moment to actually practice that ourselves. What sin is God by his spirit convicting you of right now?

Attitude? Thought? Word? Deed? What sin is God convicting you of right now?

I know the car park miracle happens. Everything's happy face when you walk into church. But what is the sin that God is writing and making you aware of right now?

[22 : 08] confess it to God sooner than later and confess it to another nearby and be assured that if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But let's press into verse 6. You could be forgiven for not noticing or particularly caring about the detail that Mark goes into about John the baptiser.

See what he's wearing and what he's eating? John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.

If you know your Old Testament you would be thinking of 2 Kings chapter 1 wouldn't you?

I'll read out to you a bit of a run through but 2 Kings chapter 1 I'll pick it up at verse 2. Now this is talking about Ahaziah the king fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria and lay sick so he sent messages telling them go inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover from this sickness.

[23 : 45] But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite arise go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them is it because there's no god in Israel that you're going to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron now therefore thus says the Lord you shall not come down from the bed to which you've gone up but you shall surely die so Elijah went the messengers returned to the king and he said to them why have you returned and they said to him there came a man to meet us go back to the king who sent you and say to him thus says the Lord is it because there's no god in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you've gone up but you shall surely die great news isn't it then that king said to him what kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things they answered he wore a garment of hair with a belt of leather around his waist and he said it's

Elijah the Tishbite so you're immediately thinking Elijah right when you're reading this what this John's wearing and then you'd almost be certainly thinking about Malachi chapter 4 the promised day of the Lord the day of judgment and salvation the promise of Elijah to come Malachi chapter 4 verse 5 behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction they're the closing words of Malachi 400 years before John the Baptist starts preaching the next prophet in Israel Elijah will come and call the people of Israel to repent to turn their hearts to the fathers to Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and Abraham who obeyed God and was counted as righteous before God and here is John looking for all intents and purposes just like

Elijah preparing the way for the Lord the great day of the Lord is about to come you can't help but feel the expectations being massive it's been 400 years since Malachi and now Elijah figures come what's going to happen next and as great as John the baptised as a proclaimer the preparer is coming he's nothing compared to the one who's coming after him look at verse 7 and what he preaches verse 7 is what John says and he preached saying after me comes he who is mightier than I the strap of whose sandals I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie I have baptised you with water but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit the one he's preparing for the people for is no one less than God himself if we've understood

Isaiah 40 correctly and so there's a baptism coming that is far far greater than the baptism that John gives a cleansing coming that's far far greater than John can offer this one will be a washing by the Holy Spirit of God himself a washing a renewal of the Holy Spirit a salvation that comes by being born again by a new birth into the kingdom of God so the imperative becomes even greater get ready to receive him believe him trust him follow him the one I'm preparing you for is imminently arriving and then he does bang the long awaited expected one arise verse nine Jesus who is from

Nazareth the Nazareth the Galilee that's where he grew up not to be confused with any other Jesus this Jesus turns up steps onto the world stage and the heavens are torn apart ripped apart and then God declares that Jesus is his son verse 11 God declares that Jesus is the king and unlike most of the kings of Israel God is pleased with this one here is one after God's own heart this is a massive event and the Holy Spirit with which Jesus will baptise comes upon him so that he can baptise others with the Holy Spirit himself here is God's king anointed not with oil but with the Holy Spirit of God and later we'll hear about the temple curtain being ripped torn apart the same word again at the end of the gospel as the kingdom of God is open for all people to enter when Jesus brings full and final and open pardon for sins but not only is he the son who is the king he is the son which is another reference to the people of

[28 : 59] Israel Exodus chapter 4 verse 22 Israel is my firstborn son and like the people of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness wilderness just coming up doesn't it because God was not pleased with them here the new Israel the perfect Israel Jesus the son the God's Israel perfect son who lives in perfect obedience to the father is taken out into the wilderness tempted but doesn't sin and now we come to the high point of chapter 1 responding to the gospel verses 14 and 15 repent Jesus reclaims the gospel of God which in the end is all about Jesus himself Jesus begins his public ministry in Galilee the northern back blocks of Israel the time is fulfilled everything is set now for this moment the kingdom of God is at hand we're going to drill down that more next week repent and believe the gospel the good news this good news is the kingdom of

God is at hand that is the gospel of God and because the kingdom of God is at hand it's time to repent change your mind get off your throne and have God truly rule every area of life John proclaimed it and now Jesus proclaims it repent and believe that this kingdom is at hand and that Jesus is the king of that kingdom the kingdom is the place where a king rules that's what a kingdom is and God's anointed king Jesus is the one who rules that kingdom and this kingdom is very very close now to coming now that Jesus come to the world let me tell you Christian life is all about repentance and faith repentance from sin belief in the gospel the good news that Jesus is king of the kingdom of God and you can't help but think it's now right Mark has an urgency in this gospel it's fast paced read he gets us going really quickly starting at the beginning of

Jesus gospel ministry and taking us to the very heart of it and the people of the day were told to prepare to repent for the coming of the Lord repenting of their sins and when the Lord who is Jesus repent to turn from their sins for the kingdom of God is at hand it's not a maybe it's not a request it's a command turn from your sin for the kingdom of God is at hand and so there can be only one application of this passage can't there only one application of this passage for us who lived 2000 years later the kingdom of God is so much closer now than it ever was before repent and believe the gospel repent from our sin repent from my sin I need to repent from my sins which are deeply embedded in my heart and submit to the kingdom of

God where Jesus is no one less than God who is the king and so be prepared for the kingdom of God because the rule of God and that kingdom is imminently closer now than it was before because if the kingdom of God was close then and with it comes a terrible day of the Lord of both salvation and condemnation how much closer must it be today and if the message then was to repent and believe how much more urgently must it be upon us and upon at one level our lips to our world in which we live let's pray our father in heaven we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who is the king of the kingdom thank you for the faithful preaching of many people down the ages thank you for John's faithful announcing of him coming thank you for marks writing down his account for us to read thank you for your mercy in sparing us that we might have come to this day to have heard your word and we thank you for your mercy in the days before us that you might give us that we might live to his praise and glory with this urgency of this gospel upon our lips that we ourselves our friends our neighbours our colleagues that we too might be those who are prepared and we might prepare many many others around about us for the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus which is still yet to come we pray in Jesus name Amen