

Who Is Jesus?

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to pick it up at Mark chapter 6 verse 1 and go through to verse 30. Mark chapter 6 verse 1. He went away from there and came to his hometown and his disciples followed him.

And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astonished saying, Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judah and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they took offence at him.

And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and among his relatives and his own household. And he could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villagers teaching. And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

[1 : 1 6] He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their bills, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that's on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

King Herod heard of it. For Jesus' name had become known. Some said, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That's why these miraculous powers are at work in him.

But others said, He's Elijah. And others said, He's a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. But when Herod heard it, he said, John whom I beheaded has been raised.

[2 : 3 3] For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her.

For John had been saying to Herod, It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe.

When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly. But an opportunity came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

For when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, Ask me for whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you.

And he vowed to her, Whatever you ask me, I will give you up to half my kingdom. And she went out and said to her mother, For what should I ask?

[3 : 42] And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head.

He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter, gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, as we come to your word this morning, help us to hear it well and help us to have hearts to obey and minds to understand clearly your word to us this morning.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the phrases that is used, almost part of our language now, is a prophet's not honoured in his hometown. It's hard for a person who's been known since birth to return to his hometown and be recognised as a man in his own right.

[5 : 13] People assume they know them too well. They don't allow them to grow up. In their mind's eye, they're nothing special. It might be that you've experienced it. You may have had that experience.

It's possible for people to actually grow up knowing about Jesus since birth and we can think that we know Jesus and become too familiar with him.

It's possible for people to grow up in a religious school or hear stories about Jesus, think they know him, put him in a box of their own understanding and never let him actually be who he really is. It's possible for people to grow up in a religious environment, the church home, and hear the stories of Jesus and think they know him, put him in a box of their own understanding and never let Jesus speak for himself.

And one thing is clear, if not all the opinions of people that have about Jesus, if they are not informed by the word of God, will be wrong.

Which is why it's always good to come back to look at the Gospels. And we aim to do that every year, having our teaching diet, a portion of the Gospels, a healthy portion of the Old Testament and a really scrumptious helping from the New Testament.

[6 : 31] That's our sort of biblical diet through the year. And we're up to Mark chapter 6 in our feeding in the Gospels. And if you're anything like me, you'll need to get up to speed with where we've come from as we get going.

So the big picture of Mark's Gospel is that there are two halves. There you go. You can see on the screen there, hopefully you'll find me. Chapters 1 to 8, it looks primarily at the question, who is Jesus?

And then the second half, of the book of Mark, looks primarily at the question, why did Jesus come? And the climax of the first half comes when Jesus asks his disciples who he is, who do people say I am, in Mark chapter 8.

Now Mark begins the Gospel in very good place, 1 chapter 1 verse 1, and Mark tells us, turn back to Mark chapter 1 verse 1 with me, Mark tells us exactly who Jesus is.

Matthew, Mark, the first, second Gospel in the New Testament, second book in the New Testament, Mark chapter 1 verse 1, he says, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[7 : 47] Now remember, Christ is not a surname like Mr. Roy Davidson, right? He says that Christ, well that's a title, right? Anointed One, King.

Anointed King. And just so we get it, he also says that he is Son of God, alright? Son of God tells us that he's a divine figure. Jesus comes into the world where the first Roman emperors wanted to trace their lineage back to the gods.

But Jesus truly is Son of God, which further reinforces that he is King. King of God's kingdom, for that's what Psalm 2 and other parts of the Old Testament teach us, Son of God is King as well.

And then we head towards Mark chapter 8, in a few weeks time we'll get there. In Mark chapter 8 verse 27 we remember that Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, that is the turning point, one of the high points, climaxes of Mark's Gospel.

Come to Mark chapter 8 verse 27, Mark chapter 8 verse 27, I can feel you're scrolling and turning pages, that's good. Mark 8 verse 27, have a look at me there, Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi and on the way he asked his disciples, who do people say I am?

[9 : 07] And they told him, John the Baptist, others said Elijah, and others one of the prophets. And he asked them, sounds familiar to our chapter 6, doesn't it? And he asked them, who do you say I am?

And Peter answered, you are the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. So in the middle of Mark's Gospel we're hearing that Jesus is the Christ.

Christ. And then Mark chapter 15, at the very end, the last person to confess him as God, Mark chapter 15 verse 37, the centurion confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark chapter 15, come to Mark chapter 15 with me, verse 37, Mark 15 verse 37. And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

So he's on the cross. And the curtain of the temple was torn into from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the Son of God.

[10 : 29] So that's the big picture of Mark's Gospel. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. What did he come to do? Well, we'll keep pushing into that in the weeks ahead.

So far in chapter 6, we've seen the mission begin, right? Come back to Mark chapter 1 verse 14. Mark chapter 1 verse 14. Here's the mission begins.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the Gospel.

Please note a few things here. Jesus is speaking and says that John has been arrested, put in prison, as we heard by King Herod in chapter 6.

And Jesus comes on into the scene and all the while, John is either in prison or has been executed. And we're in Galilee, and he came to Galilee from Nazareth, which was his hometown.

[11 : 38] So all through the Gospels, Jesus is known as Jesus of Nazareth. Luke chapter 2 verse 39 says that they had returned there after Jesus was born.

John chapter 1 verse 45, Nathanael tells us that Nazareth was a backwater, a nothingness. I mean, Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth?

It's like Bagara. Can anything good come from Bagara? Well, let's see how Lachlan turns out. Now, you might see it on the map behind me here.

In the green area at the top, that's Galilee. And Galilee is a region like the northern suburbs of Brisbane. It's a region, right? And in there is an obscure town, Nazareth.

It's just in the bottom third of that middle sort of green area up the top there. Now, the gospel is the announcement that the kingdom of God is at hand.

[12 : 40] Time to repent and believe it. That's the good momentous news. The kingdom of God's coming, it's momentous news and Jesus is the king of that kingdom and the kingdom is going to invade the whole world and it's far greater than any kingdom in this world.

And at one level that's the topic sentence for the whole of Mark's gospel. And repentance is at the heart of it. Repentance simply means change mind, you know that?

Change your mind about something. You used to think fishing was a bad thing, now you think fishing is a good thing. You used to think that whatever it was was not so nice and now it is so nice. You used to think you couldn't cook sourdough bread, now you can, you repented about your thinking.

And we change our minds when we change our actions. Right? And notice it's not an optional extra here in Mark chapter 1, it's a command, the kingdom of God is at hand, stop thinking that it isn't, right?

Believe that it is, it's a command. And believe simply means trust, right? Trust, faith, believe, all the same kind of word.

[13 : 54] Trust that the kingdom of God is near. Believe that the kingdom of God is near. Have faith that the kingdom of God is near. And repentance is the way to become a Christian.

Repentance and faith is the normal life of a Christian. And from there we come to Mark chapter 2 and we saw that Jesus has authority to forgive sins, something that only God can do.

And then in chapter 3, great crowds were attracted to Jesus and what he was doing, healing people from various ailments, driving out demons, preaching in the synagogues and the crowds came to him.

In chapter 3D, have a look at within chapter 3. Chapter 3, verse 7. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea and a great crowd followed from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Ijmae and beyond the Jordan and from around the Tyre and Sidon.

All of Israel's heard of Jesus and all of Israel's coming out to find him. They've heard about the great things he's capable of doing. And then chapter 4, Jesus starts teaching about the kingdom of God.

[15 : 17] And then in chapter 5, Jesus does one of his most amazing miracles. the most amazing miracle yet. He raises a little girl, the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue ruler from the dead.

Have a look at chapter 5, pick it up at verse 41. Chapter 5, verse 41. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, Talitha kumi, which means little girl, I say to you, arise.

and immediately the girl got up and began walking for she was 12 years of age. And they were immediately overcome with amazement and he strictly charged them that no one should know this and he told them to give her something to eat.

Which then brings us to chapter 6. But just before we dive into today's passage, I want to commend a little book to you, a great little book. And it's something you may have heard of, a book called Dig Deeper, which is really helpful in giving us some tools to understand the Bible.

Here's the next book in the series, Dig Deeper Into the Gospels. It's a kind of book to have as a companion to reading through Mark's Gospel.

[16 : 33] And I'd really encourage you to read Mark's Gospel sometime rather than next little while if you haven't already. It takes about 90 minutes to read through the whole of Mark's Gospel. Okay, well then let's plunge into the first half of chapter 6.

Jesus leaves the side of the Sea of Galilee, possibly Capernaum, you see the map up there, and he returns to Nazareth, his hometown, the middle of Galilee, in that top area, that green area there.

And he does what he usually does there. He teaches in the synagogue and he astonishes those who are there.

I mean, isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this, we know his brothers and sisters. He's no rabbi, he's no scribe, he's no university, no theological college, he's no elder in the synagogue.

Who does he think he is? Who is this man? Now, just an aside, we're not sure where Joseph is, he may have died, but we do know that Mary was not a perpetual virgin, she had normal and God-honouring intimate relationships with Joseph, evident by the children that she had.

[18 : 00] And Jesus tells them that a prophet is not without honour except in his hometown and among his relatives in his own household. So Jesus is at least calling himself a prophet, but a prophet without honour.

He's a prophet, someone who reveals the word of God to the world. It's an apt description of who Jesus is. And his family's amazed at his abilities to teach and the wisdom he has, and he's amazed at their rejection of him, their unbelief in him.

Now let me say, just being amazed by Jesus is not the right way to respond to Jesus. Being intellectually dazzled by the depths of theological insight and wisdom we have and may have about who Jesus is, is not enough.

The demons are utterly amazed by Jesus as well. they even tremble before him, but they do not act rightly on their knowledge of him.

They do not repent and believe in him. Being amazed when we hear of what Jesus did and taking offence at him, dishonouring him by rejecting him, is a dangerous place to be in.

[19 : 23] And Jesus calls people to repent and believe in him, not simply to be amazed by him. And so Jesus could not do any mighty work there.

Strange that the Son of God, God the Son, could not do any mighty work there, except heal a few people. That's pretty amazing stuff, isn't it? Why? Because the people there by and large do not repent and believe in him.

And then notice he goes around the villages teaching, the very thing he came to his hometown to do. Now his disciples are with him, they come with him, and he calls them to himself, and then he sends them out into Galilee from Nazareth, and he gives them authority over the demons, did you see?

Verse 7, he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. As the kingdom of God breaks in, the demons, the spirits of the kingdom of this world are cast out.

We do believe that there are evil spirits and there are demons, but where the gospel goes, they are cast out and freedom and light comes, and where there is no gospel, there is deep darkness and trouble and strife with the spirit world.

[20 : 55] people and so they go and they proclaim that people should repent. What should they repent from?

They should change their minds and change their actions, but about what? The people need to recognise that the kingdom of God is at hand and they need to honour the Lord God as God and live to please him.

warn them that the kingdom of God is coming and they need to be ready before it's too late. The emperor is not God. Herod may be king, but he's not the one to fear.

The Lord God who made the heavens and the earth is the one to fear. Now, if you preach that, good. People believe and they'll welcome you in, good.

Enjoy their hospitality, but if not, then leave and have nothing to do with that place. Shake off the dust from your feet. As they reject you, show them that God rejects them.

[21 : 59] And so they go and proclaim that people should repent. And it seems that those who are not from Jesus' hometown, those who are not in his immediate family, believe.

The disciples cast out many demons. They do mighty works of God. They heal the sick. And the people move from mourning to being joyful.

There's nothing magical. See there in verse 13? And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. There's nothing magical about being anointed with oil.

This is something that people put on sick people. Luke chapter 10. The Samaritan put it on a beaten up man. In Isaiah chapter 6 we read of the good news, the gospel coming to the poor.

that in the year of the Lord's favour, in the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, garments of praise instead of faint spirit, that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

[23 : 07] When the kingdom of God comes, it's beautiful picture, it's a glorious picture, riches of, Ezekiel chapter 16, we're about the restored people of God being anointed with oil.

As the kingdom breaks in and people experience the blessing of it, this changes things for the better and enjoy the oil of gladness instead of mourning, being sick and broken hearted and downcast.

Who is this man who can give authority to his disciples to have authority to teach, to heal, to cast out demons just like he does? Teaching them the good news that the kingdom of God is near and calling people to repent and believe the gospel, that good news.

Well, who is this man? Verses 14 to 30. People have various ideas about who Jesus is. They're all wrong. King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known, heard about the miracles and the casting out and the teaching.

His identity had been made clear, but had it really, his reputation had been revealed, but had it been understood? Jesus has caught the attention of Herod.

[24 : 26] The obscure carpenter from the obscure place of Nazareth, nowheresville, has caught the attention of the ruler of the land by what he's been doing, what he's been up to.

And at one level, the last thing you want to do is draw Herod's attention to yourself. But Jesus can't help it.

News of what he's doing and what his disciples are doing has gone viral. The teachers teaching and doing miraculous signs and works, and so are his close associates.

Crowds are flocking to from all over Israel, Herod's position of influence is being undermined, under threat. And people are coming to various conclusions about who Jesus is.

Some say he's John the Baptist, come back to life. After all, John was a preacher in remote places and crowds had come to him.

[25 : 29] In a world of chaotic, supernatural superstition, John might have come back bigger and better than he was before. It's clear that Jesus doing things that are beyond this world, they're miraculous.

Some say Elijah, the great prophet of old, who didn't die but was taken up in the clouds in a chariot, who was expected to return before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Maybe Jesus is Elijah, could be him. More of this when we get to chapter 8. Some say he's a prophet, one like the prophets of old. There's prophetic activity going on.

John had come and been taken out of action by Herod. Maybe God sent yet another prophet to us. Just who is this man, Jesus?

Herod concludes that he's John the Baptist, come back to life. The supernatural world is alive and well in the days of Jesus. And here we get the account of John being executed by a cowardly king, a king who wouldn't listen to the word of God, who refused to repent at the word of God.

[26 : 49] And when he was told that he shouldn't have married his brother's wife, Herod knew that John was a righteous man. Herod liked hearing what John would say to him, verse 20, but he was greatly perplexed at hearing the things that John would say to him.

I'm sure that John would have taught him about Jesus and how Jesus is greater than himself, greater than John the Baptist. For that is what he preached to those who came to him in the wilderness.

He taught that after him would come one who was mightier than I, the stripe of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie. I baptise you with water but he'll baptise you with the Holy Spirit.

Herod liked hearing the word of God but was unwilling to obey it for fear of his wife. Now just a couple of things to notice about Herod dealing with John.

One we see the pattern here of what is to come. Herod had the power to grant a righteous man his life to free him but instead he kills him.

[28 : 00] Soon another person in authority will hand over a righteous man to be crucified when he had the authority to grant life but doesn't. His body too will be taken by his disciples and laid in a tomb but that tomb won't hold him for long.

But more telling is this here is a man who will not repent when he hears the word of God. At one level he fears it. At one level he's perplexed by it.

Greatly perplexed by it it says. He was at a loss. He didn't know which way to go. And in the end his dithering led to disaster.

His failure to rightly hear the word of God his failure to repent leads to the beheading of a righteous John the Baptist.

And Herod thinks that Jesus if John the Baptist come back to haunt him maybe he'll be greatly perplexed more. Not so.

[29 : 14] Herod refuses to repent at the teaching of John and Herod refuses to repent when he hears of the coming of Jesus. It's one thing to hear the word of God it's another thing to respond rightly to it.

Clearly being greatly perplexed by it and still wanting to hear more is foolish. Merely being entertained by the word of God is not appropriate when the word of God challenges us.

The appropriate response is to obey God's word and repent where we're not living in obedience to it. Well then verse 30 the apostles return and tell Jesus all that they had done and taught verse 30 interesting that the 12 disciples that are sent are called the apostles the sent ones who return.

Well who is this man? That's the question that will confront us more and more as we keep working our way through Mark's gospel. He's the one who astounds people by what he teaches and what he can do.

He's the one who is not recognised as being who he really is by those who are closest to him. He's rejected by his own people.

[30 : 36] He's the one who is great in wisdom astonishing people who in the end astonish him by not repenting and believing in him. He's not John the Baptist brought back to life.

That much is clear. Jesus is the one who calls people to repent and believe that the kingdom of God is near. Merely being amazed by Jesus without hearing what he has to say does not honour him.

And people will have all kind of opinions about Jesus and most of those opinions if not all if they're not informed by the word of God will be wrong as Herod was.

Merely being entertained by God's word is foolishness. Being perplexed by it is one thing but failing to repent when confronted by it if convicted by it is folly.

And the kingdom of God while near Jesus walked on earth has come but is currently still opposed by this world resisted by the rules of this world stood against by the rulers of this world but the unopposed kingdom of God is still to come and the message is still the same for everyone repent from living in resistance to the king of the kingdom now for some that would mean submitting to Jesus Lord for the first time and for the rest of us that will be the daily pattern of our lives for it's a normal pattern of the follower of Jesus repentance and belief repentance and faith and then faith and repentance and then repentance and faith that is the normal cycle a normal life repentance from our inadequate understanding of

[32 : 42] Jesus repentance from our inadequate response to God's word leading to a life of obedience to Jesus as we grow in our trust for his word looking forward to anticipating longing for waiting for the day and the joy of the kingdom of God to come let's pray our father in heaven we look forward to that great day when we see your kingdom fully and finally and we thank you that the kingdom has come in Christ and the kingdom is near any time now please help us to have this urgency on our hearts and our minds and our lips as we live in this world and help us not merely to be entertained by your word but to be convicted and challenged and changed as we live lives of repentance and faith in your son we pray in

Jesus name amen