

Jesus' First Words

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[0 : 00] If you could choose one person from history who you'd like to meet face to face, who would it be?

For some perhaps, William Shakespeare. For others, Jane Austen. For others, maybe Albert Einstein or Marie Curie. Perhaps for some, Mozart or Louis Armstrong.

For still others, Jock Steen or Bill Shankly. For the Christian, Jesus Christ stands head and shoulders above anybody else.

At the same time, the most attractive and pivotal figure in history, Jesus of Nazareth changes the world forever. The thing is that the Christian makes the most astonishing claim.

Not only does she want to meet Jesus Christ, she has met Him. And she knows Him. She hears His voice through the pages of God's Word.

[1 : 01] She talks to Him in prayer and she senses His presence with her through the Holy Spirit day by day. For her, Jesus isn't a historical figure as much as a real person with whom she enjoys a life-giving relationship by faith.

He's not yesterday's man. He's today's man. He's today's man. And tomorrow's man. Without Him, her life is empty.

But with Him, her life is full. Jesus Christ is the greatest human being to ever have lived. Greater by far than all those we have mentioned.

Know Him, and His love is greater than life itself. Jesus bursts in upon the scene in Mark chapter 1, verses 14 through 15.

Having been baptized in River Jordan, having triumphed over Satan's temptations in the wilderness, Jesus begins His public ministry in the northern region of Galilee.

[2 : 01] And His message is summed up in these words, The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

Jesus' first public words contain two things we need to know and two things we need to do.

In the coming of Jesus, God is doing something. And in the light of the coming of Jesus, God is calling us to do something. If you're not yet a Christian here today, you can meet the most attractive and important figure in history for yourself.

You can meet Jesus Christ here today and enjoy for yourself a life-giving relationship with Him by faith. So, first of all, there are two things we need to know.

There are two things we need to know. There is nothing new under the sun, or so the writer to Ecclesiastes says. We've heard it all before in one guise or another.

[3 : 09] But when Jesus bursts in upon the scene, He says things that we truly had never heard before. New information which changes everything about us and about our world.

He said, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Here then are the two things that we need to know today. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

The time is fulfilled, first of all. The time is fulfilled. There are two words which are used in the language of the New Testament, which we translate by our English word, time.

The first is *chronos*, which refers to the passing of time, seconds, minutes, and hours. The second is *kairos*, which refers to a decisive or opportune time.

We use the first word *chronos* when we look at our watches. We use the second word when we talk about an athlete competing in a race, talking about it being my time to show how she's the best athlete in the world.

[4 : 19] *Chronos* refers to how long it takes to fill a bottle with water. *Kairos* is when it's time to drink. In verse 15, it is *kairos* which is used.

Jesus is telling us the bottle is filled to the brim, and it's time to take a drink. The *kairos* is fulfilled.

Now is the day of opportunity. The waiting is over. It's the season of decision. Now is the time to run the race. The training is all over.

It's time to get our bodies working. He's referring to how, after long centuries of waiting for the Messiah, He has now come.

The promises of God given over a period of thousands of years and more have been fulfilled. What was once only a dream in Jewish minds is now a reality.

[5 : 20] The Messiah has come. The promised King of Israel is here. Now is the time of opportunity and fulfillment. Jesus is the first to have ever said such a thing.

You know, we split the history of the world into B.C. and A.D., before Christ and Anno Domini, after Christ.

The coming of Jesus, especially the beginning of His public ministry, divides the world into two periods. The years of looking forward to His coming, B.C., and the years of looking back, A.D. The time is fulfilled. Jesus has come. And that's world news affecting every person on planet Earth. What will we do with the opportunity, the kairos, God gives us today to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, His promised Messiah? Will we make it our time?

[6 : 24] Or will we let this world-changing news pass us by? That's the first thing we need to know. The time is fulfilled. The second is this. The kingdom of God is at hand.

The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is a big theme in the three synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There are many ways we could describe the kingdom of God, but the most important is this.

Wherever the king is, there's his kingdom. By using this phrase, is at hand, Jesus is telling us that the kingdom of God is so close to His hearers that they may enter it at that very moment.

It's like an ambulance arriving at the house of someone who has phoned 999. Help is at hand. The kingdom of God, namely the king, is here.

He's at hand. Jesus is announcing He is God's king. And whatever He is, is God's kingdom. Here we have the king of salvation, preaching in Galilee, proclaiming the good news that the promises of God have been fulfilled.

[7 : 40] Now is the time to repent and believe in Him. If it was to be an earthly kingdom, Jesus would have burst in upon the Jerusalem scene, where the rich, the influential, and the powerful sat on earthly thrones.

He would have proclaimed a message of revolution against the Romans. But here He is, God's king, in the far-off region of Galilee, proclaiming not an earthly, but a spiritual kingdom of love and of faith and of righteousness.

Whatever Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. All the promises of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah are condensed into this Jewish man in Galilee, proclaiming the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand.

The kairos, the opportunity has come because the king has come. There is the dividing line. There is the most significant event to ever have happened.

Jesus is the most important person in history because He is the king of salvation. He is God's promised Messiah sent to proclaim and to achieve salvation for all who repent and believe in Him.

[9 : 02] Every time His word is preached and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is proclaimed, His kingdom is near.

He draws close and He tells us that we may enter it at that very moment by faith in Him. His kingdom is at hand here today.

Whatever else of note is happening in our world is of secondary importance compared to this.

Whenever His word is proclaimed in pulpits all over the world, His kingdom is at hand and sinners like us, those far away from Him by nature, are given a fresh opportunity to respond in repentance and faith.

Now most of the information that I learn on a daily basis is pretty irrelevant. Do I really need to know that HSL are offering a 10% reduction on recliners?

Or that, is it going to change my life to know that EasyJet are offering flights to Alicante three times a week rather than two? So you might be saying to yourself as you listen to me, well I'm listening to what you're saying but of what relevance is this to me today?

[10 : 22] What relevance is this? My friend, to ignore the two things you need to know is spiritual suicide. The King of salvation has come and He is speaking to each of us through His word today.

He is speaking through our ears into our hearts and when the King speaks we must listen. You may not have heard it before because it's a message you won't get on news feeds but these are the two most important things we need to know.

The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Eternal life is as close to all of us today as is the air we breathe because the King of salvation is near.

Now is our time. Now is our day of salvation. Two things we need to know. Well then secondly this morning two things we need to do.

Two things we need to do. The time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand. The age of waiting is over and the era of the kingdom has come. That is the what we need to know.

[11 : 39] But then comes a question which is of equal importance. We've heard the what but now Jesus goes on to answer the so what. What must we do to deceive the kingdom of God and respond to the beginning of this new age of fulfillment?

How should we respond to the coming of the King of salvation Jesus Christ? Jesus answers the so what question by commanding us repent and believe in the gospel.

Repent and believe in the gospel. We often frame our response to Jesus in terms of an invitation to come to Him. But Jesus' first public words are not an invitation but a command.

The King of salvation commands and we must obey. It is not a matter of personal choice whether we heed this command. It is a matter of simple obedience.

Shall we obey or disobey? That is what's at issue today. If we want to be saved we must obey Him. Shall we heed the King of salvation or shall we yet again disobey?

[13 : 00] Jesus' first words are a summary of His entire mission and teaching. Everything else in the gospels is an illustration and application of these two commands to repent and believe.

Notice also that Jesus here calls the two things we need to know the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand as the gospel the good news.

So if we're asked what is the gospel we can get complicated or we can keep it simple. In Jesus' mind the gospel consists in His coming as the King of salvation.

The gospel is Christ come among us His presence with us. So by way of response in answer to the so what question of the beginning of the new age of fulfillment in Jesus Christ we are to do two things repent and believe.

Repent and believe. We are to repent first of all. The word repent literally means to change one's mind. However in the world of Jesus' day it meant more than an intellectual change.

[14 : 13] it represented a whole life change. The compass of one's life once pointed north now it points south. It's a change of direction. In the Bible sense of course to repent contains the idea of being sorry for our sins.

The idea of contrition and regret. You know our politicians they'll go to the ends of the earth to avoid saying the S word sorry.

they'll talk of an error of judgment but to say sorry is something I have never heard from the mouth of a politician. They've been caught in a lie but rather than come clean they'll make excuses and for that reason among many I don't trust them.

But we're like that with God are we not? God has given us His divine law but we've chosen our own way instead. God commanded us to love Him with all our heart soul strength and mind but not only do we fail to obey Him we even deny His existence.

The reality of today's Western citizen is the God of the self. We live for pleasure and happiness and the King of salvation doesn't get a look in. Who God is in His holiness and purity and love is abhorrent to us.

[15 : 38] We have no God but ourselves. He also commanded us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves but we've twisted His command from love your neighbor as yourself to use your neighbor for yourself.

As long as we're okay and our family's okay who cares about anyone else? The result is a broken society and broken people lonely, confused, hopeless, women are objectified, men are testosterone driven, children forced to become adults before they're ready and their heads filled with all kinds of gender driven nonsense they aren't mature enough to understand.

Unless we think it's any worse today than it was yesterday, let's remember the specter of Victorian poorhouses and before that the inhumanity of slavery. Even today, 2,000 years after Christ declared all human beings equal in the sight of God it's questionable whether women have the

same rights as men in our society or that people of color are taken quite as seriously as those who are white.

When will we as individuals and as a society say sorry to God, the God who made us and loves us? that maybe you say well, I've done nothing wrong, nothing I need to say sorry to God for.

Well in your mind you may think you haven't but are we really so self-unaware as to think that we've got nothing of which to be sorry? Tell you what, we're going to erect a spiritual x-ray machine in our church and we're going to hook it up to the video feed so that everyone else here can see exactly what you've been thinking about this week.

[17 : 30] How would you feel about that? To repent is to completely change the direction of our lives to stop going our own way and start in the opposite direction.

And why should we do that? Because the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. The king of salvation is here today but he is also the king of judgment and outside him none shall stand. All must bow before his holiness and purity. Without him and outside him there is no possibility of salvation. Have you ever said sorry to God?

Not to yourself for failing to meet your own standards or to others for failing to meet theirs but to the only one who really matters God.

No excuses no spin just sorry. Before we dismiss repentance let's remember this is not an invitation to do something with which we're uncomfortable.

[18 : 41] It is a command from Jesus the king. Repent. And then secondly believe the gospel.

Believe the gospel. The consistent command of Jesus in the gospels is to believe in him. The word believe means to have faith. Jesus calls us to believe and have faith in him as the king of salvation. It is not merely to believe certain things to be true about Jesus. It is not simply to accept the historical fact of his life, death and resurrection. It is not simply to find those truths about Jesus attractive.

It is not merely to say that Jesus Christ is the greatest man to have ever lived and to admire his love and his righteousness and his self-sacrifice on the cross. We might say of an investment fund it earns a high interest rate and it's far more attractive than what my bank offers.

And yet because we haven't invested a penny into this high interest investment fund it profits us nothing. We believe in the statistical facts of this fund earning a high reward.

[19 : 56] We know it offers better interest rates than we presently earn from our bank but despite what we know to be true because we do not personally choose to invest in that fund we gain nothing from it.

Intellectual knowledge about Jesus and his salvation is not enough. We must know the two things Jesus has told us but unless we are personally invested in him it profits us nothing.

In fact it condemns us because having known the truth about Jesus Christ we did nothing with it.

But for all that we must be intellectually convinced lest our faith be in nothing and worth nothing.

Many people in our society say they have faith but it's not saving faith because it's not faith in Jesus Christ the King of salvation. But saving faith must be more than mere head knowledge.

It must also contain heart attraction. One may know a certain truth but find that truth very distasteful. For example I know that there are trillions of midges in Scotland but I find such knowledge makes me itch.

[21 : 11] I find such knowledge distasteful I'd rather it was false. The devil knows the truth about Jesus and his kingdom but he finds it abhorrent and he hates it wishing it were false.

Do you find the truth about Jesus Christ as the King of salvation? Do you find it doesn't just satisfy your intellect but it moves your heart? Do you find his good news attractive? Do you want the salvation and eternal life he has to offer?

Saving faith is not merely about knowledge it's about desire. If today you are strangely drawn to the message of Jesus take heart for no one can find the gospel attractive unless the spirit of God is at work in them.

But saving faith is not merely head knowledge and heart attraction it is personal trust. As I said to the children when I was on holiday in Tenerife my knee became so sore I had to buy that walking stick.

Now I knew I needed that stick. I also knew that that stick was strong enough to support my weight. I even knew it was the right height to match my frame.

[22 : 19] I knew all these things but these things would have been useless to me unless I took that walking stick placed my full weight upon it and walked my first steps with it.

I also really wanted to walk so that I could enjoy my holiday. but unless I had leaned on that stick and walked with that stick it would have been useless to me. My head and my heart were in it but I needed to do something.

Saving faith is head knowledge plus heart attraction plus personal trust. It is both it is to both renounce one's ability to save oneself and to trust oneself to Jesus Christ as the king of salvation. Repentance from sin and self is self-renouncement and saving faith in Jesus is the trust. The walking stick only serves me well when I use it.

The high interest fund will only benefit the person who personally invests money in it. To respond correctly to the two things we must know is to leave behind our old lives by embracing a new life of depending on and trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal salvation.

[23 : 47] Perhaps you've never had to walk with a walking stick and I hope you never have to but today the command of Jesus is this lean on me.

put the full weight of your hope of salvation upon me. If you want to take advantage of the greatest news in history we need to put our trust in the greatest person in history.

And having taken our first steps in repentance and faith that's the way we'll walk our whole lives through. A life of continually turning away from self and trusting more in Jesus Christ.

What's stopping you from taking that first step today in new life? If it's family take them with you by modelling what it means to trust in Jesus.

If it's work or reputation or status ask yourself are any of these things important enough to sacrifice myself for? Or maybe it's just fear of the unknown.

[24 : 54] the moment you put your trust in Jesus He promises to be with you for the rest of your life. Or maybe it's just that you don't think you can keep up being a Christian.

Again the moment you become a Christian the moment you believe the good news Jesus promises you daily strength. There is nothing important enough in life nothing to stop you repenting and trusting in Jesus for yourself today.

Given what Jesus has told us that today is the day of opportunity today is the day to turn away from self and toward Jesus Christ the King of salvation we hear these words once more the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.