

SUMMER 1 - Mark the Man - Who is this Man?

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Date: 07 January 2004

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[0 : 00] O God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God who is not remote and unknowable, but that by your grace and mercy you make yourself known through the words of Scripture which testify to your Son, Jesus Christ.

We pray that as we come to these words now, that your Spirit will write them on our hearts, that we may believe them, follow them and obey them for the sake and glory of our Saviour and your Son. Amen.

When important people come to town, there's quite often a very lengthy build-up. Do you remember it when George Bush was coming to Australia? We seem to hear about it for days on end before he arrived, the heightened security, the increase in the political cartoons and the age and so on.

If it's the palace, then they presumably send out their corgi dogs to do a sort of preliminary sniff to build up to the arrival of the Queen or whoever it is.

If it's a foreign cricket team, then usually the media are doing a con job to tell us how good they are and how exciting the series will be. There are usually press releases, adverts, newspaper articles, opinion columns, government announcements, depending on who it is who's coming.

[1 : 27] And then, of course, when the person actually arrives, there's usually a media melee at the airport. All sorts of cameras and reporters all jostling for the first photos.

Whatever dignitary it is arrives out of those doors at Tullamarine Airport to the red carpet, wearing the ubiquitous sunglasses, limousines waiting. I must say, every time I come through the doors of Tullamarine Airport, I stand and look around for the red carpet and it's not there and I can't see my limousine waiting, but then I've usually forgotten to wear my sunglasses as well.

And, of course, there's lots of interviews and chat show interviews and all that sort of thing when important people come to town. But often after the build-up, there's quite a surprise. I mean, there's a surprise, you know, how short the Queen is, for example, how hopeless the music is from whatever great guest musician it is who's arrived.

How good the cricket team has arrived actually really is. That's usually a surprise as it's been this summer. Sometimes, of course, when somebody important arrives, there's actually some opposition, protests and that sort of thing, like when George Bush comes or other world leaders from time to time.

If you remember back to Frank Sinatra coming years ago and sort of furor and opposition when he was here. Well, a few years before TV was here, so a few years before Tullamarine Airport was built, the Messiah came to town.

[2 : 48] He came to Galilee, really, hardly the major city, but the Messiah came to Galilee. And that's where we pick up the story of Mark's Gospel. But there'd been a lengthy build-up.

Not quite the sort of build-up we expect with chat show comments and newspaper editorials and that sort of thing, but a lengthy build-up for perhaps one could argue 2,000 years, but certainly the better part of 1,000 years or more with different expectations being written about, proclaimed and spoken about by various people through what we call the Old Testament.

Certainly the expectation, the build-up of the arrival of the Messiah was intensifying during the time of Roman occupation of the Promised Land, the land that today we call Israel or perhaps Israel, the West Bank or Palestine.

The Romans had taken over that land in 63 BC. Previously it was part of the Greek Empire created by Alexander the Great when he in turn had overthrown the Persians back in 333 BC.

But under the Roman general Pompey, they had taken over the land in 63. And during that 60-year period or so until Jesus was born, there was an increase in expectation that the Messiah was imminent, that he was coming soon.

[4 : 09] Part of that was because of the increased hostility from the Romans to the Jews. Partly the Romans fuelled it, partly the Jews fuelled it as well. And caught in the middle, in one sense, was Herod the Great who tried to keep both sides happy but really didn't keep either one of them happy.

But certainly by the time Jesus actually was born and certainly by the time he became an adult, the expectation of a Messiah figure was high. The Romans were by and large loathed and so because it was in effect the country of God's people but under an oppressive regime, there was a very high expectation that the Messiah would come soon and overthrow the oppressors, the Romans, and bring about Jewish rule, a Jewish king, as it ought to have been from the heyday of King David a thousand years before.

That's the sort of context we've got to be aware of. At the actual time of Jesus' birth, Herod the Great was nominally the ruler of the Jews but he was in effect put there with the approval of the Roman emperor.

He died not long after Jesus was born and his kingdom was divided amongst some of his sons, those who'd actually survived his life because he killed most of his children. And some of his sons were even worse than he was.

He was bad, a megalomaniac. Herod Archelaus, one of his sons that ruled Judea, the area around Jerusalem, was so bad that even the Jews wanted to get rid of him and the Romans wanted to get rid of him which is why by the time Jesus is an adult, you've got a Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate by that stage but a sequence of Roman governors because they'd actually done away with the Jewish ruler altogether.

[5 : 51] And the Roman governor of Judea, Pilate, was no friend to the Jews either. But further north around Galilee, one of Herod's sons was still the ruler, Herod Antipas, not a particularly pleasant person.

A bit more benign was another of Herod's sons further north and further to the east in Golanitis called Herod Philip after which we get the town of Caesarea Philippi, a town that he built but in honour of the Caesar.

So that's the sort of political situation, if you like, that forms the background to the arrival of Jesus and it's important to grasp that because it's important to recognise that Jesus is coming to a real situation, a real country, in a real time, in a real political, geographical, historical space.

We're not dealing here with made up stories and so we're dealing with Jesus coming where there's quite a foment of expectation of a Messiah but in particular a political Messiah, a Messiah who will overthrow the Romans, probably by force, although there were some Jews who thought that that would not happen that way.

So that's the background, a bit of background anyway, to coming to deal with the adult life of Jesus Christ. What we find though in the opening section of Mark 1 is a series of public announcements, proclamations if you like, a bit like the media releases that lead up to the arrival of a great dignitary.

[7 : 21] So in verses 2 and 3 we get a quote from Isaiah News Limited. See I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

Well those words were spoken maybe as early as 750 BC, Isaiah's lifetime. They referred to a time after his life, talking about 550 BC, give or take, when the people of Israel would be in exile but the announcement was that they'll come back from exile in Babylon to their own land.

But Isaiah's book is more than just coming back from exile to their land, it's also about coming back to God. That is a spiritual return from exile. And if you read especially the second half of Isaiah, this quote from Isaiah 40 actually begins the second half of the book of Isaiah.

We see those two strands running. Return to land, but more importantly in the end, return to God. So the significance of this quote here is to say that it's yet to be fulfilled at the time of Jesus or rather it's fulfilled in Jesus, I should say.

So a long period from its original announcement to its fulfilment. God's timing is often different from ours, of course, and we might pray a prayer one day and be angry that it's not answered the next.

[8 : 45] Well here are probably people praying for a return from exile and it took 750 years before Jesus came. So sometimes we have to be perhaps a little bit more patient than we are with our prayers. But what this is saying, this announcement is saying and placed here at the beginning of Mark's Gospel is that the events that are unfolding in the pages ahead is about not the return to land but the return to God and we'll see that being shown to us in the weeks ahead.

Now the actual announcement is that somebody will come ahead of the Lord to prepare his way like the media advisor might do for an important dignitary. And so John the Baptist also makes a press release, we might say.

If you look down to verses 7 and 8, John the Baptist, who is the forerunner announced by Isaiah, he says, the one who is more powerful than I is coming after me.

I'm not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I baptise you with water that he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. So that's the second announcement.

The first is Isaiah who's announcing the coming of Jesus but also announcing the coming of the forerunner. The forerunner comes, John the Baptist, he makes his announcement that Jesus is coming, that's verses 7 and 8.

[10 : 05] Next we get in verse 11 an announcement from heaven. You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased. So God now announces the coming of the Messiah who is in fact his son, his beloved one.

A fairly unique relationship implied by those words. And that announcement of the Father God in heaven, you are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased, is echoed at the very end of Mark's gospel by the Roman centurion, truly this was the son of God.

So it sort of brackets the whole gospel with the announcement of who the Messiah is. He's the very son of God. And then we might also say that before all of that or incorporated into it, Mark himself makes an announcement.

Mark wrote this gospel after the event. He wrote it for our benefit amongst others. So at the very beginning of the gospel, he says in verse 1, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

There's Mark's public pronouncement, if you like, about this Messiah who will come. It's a gospel. Some translations say good news. But the word is gospel and the word means good news.

[11 : 21] It was often used for an official and often an imperial decree. there was a decree found from the Emperor Augustus in 29 BC that was announcing a time of peace that was the gospel of Augustus being announced.

That was found at a little place in Turkey called Prien that some of us at least were at a few months ago on a trip that some people from here went that I was leading to Greece and Turkey. So the word has that sense of imperial decree an important announcement about it.

The word gospel that is. Certainly good news but it's also a word that though it's got theological background it's actually borrowed also from the sort of milieu of the Roman world I guess as well.

Well finally the man came the Messiah himself. After all this sequence of announcements Mark and Isaiah and John the Baptist and God's own words from heaven we finally get Jesus coming on the scene in verses 14 and 15.

In effect he's there already but now comes his announcement. He's baptised by John he goes into the wilderness but it's only after John was arrested that Jesus comes centre stage so to speak and remains there pretty much thereafter.

[12 : 45] So after John was arrested verse 14 says Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near repent and believe in the good news.

Well we could spend a lot of time analysing all of that it's actually better to keep reading the gospel to see what it is in effect but he's announcing the kingdom of God we might say the kingship of God because it's not talking about a geographical place so much as the rule of God now being evident and manifest and we'll see how that is so in the pages that follow but there is the response right at the beginning of this gospel right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry this is how we're to respond to Jesus repent and believe or trust the good news and simply they are the two things that from beginning to end of scripture we are to do in response to God and his word trust it and turn away that's what repent is from our wrongdoing our sin not just saying sorry for our sin that's far too weak repentance is about an about face a turnaround from one avenue of life to another avenue of life and trusting the good news the gospel not just belief in an intellectual sense

I believe that this is true but belief in the sense that you trust it that you act upon it and by turning away from wrongdoing repenting of your sins there's a turning to right doing that accompanies that faith and obedience are the two things God always wants and you can never have one without the other in the end faith without obedience is not in the end faith and obedience without faith is not in fact obedience they're not separate things they're flip sides of the same coin really so this is an announcement about what Jesus is doing but at the same time it's an announcement to follow him to trust him and believe what he's on about so there is a fundamental call to discipleship so if we understand Mark's gospel properly in the end we will not just have knowledge about Jesus but we'll follow him because that's why it's written and that's why the scriptures are written it'll change our life now expectations at the time did vary most Jews expected the

Messiah to come and overthrow the Romans a political manifesto most Jews expected the Messiah to be mixing with the rich and famous to be patting on the back the Jewish religious leaders even though they fought amongst themselves as well but what we find here and in each of the gospels is that Jesus doesn't meet expectations on the one hand there are miracles and profound teaching they wow the crowds huge crowds that follow him but on the other hand he keeps some questionable company more often than not it seems so it keeps raising the question who is this man who is this Jesus he doesn't quite meet our expectations and Mark in particular writes his gospel begging that question of us who is this man now he was no doubt a person of authority and that's the first thing that Mark wants to stress for us and we'll see it in a sequence of episodes that follow in verses 16 to 20

Jesus calls Peter and Andrew or Simon and Andrew as it's called here and James and John to be his disciples and in that little story which many of us will be familiar we see an incredible authority it's probable that Jesus had already met these people before these fishermen if you put the sequences of all of the gospels together it's probably not walking up to complete strangers and saying drop your nets and follow me they've probably met before but that doesn't undermine the significance of the authority of Jesus here for which people would just drop everything to leave and follow a person who offers no financial security if perhaps you're running the business that your family depends upon you or your aged mother depends upon you or something like that there's an incredible authority of Jesus personally over these disciples who leave everything to follow him and that's one of the themes of discipleship in this gospel following

[17 : 28] Jesus may well mean leaving things behind and so Jesus acknowledges that when Peter says to him we've left all this and he says well those who've left everything for me and the kingdom will be blessed in this life as well as in the life to come he promises them that they'll become fishers of people of fishers of men traditionally that indeed they do well after Jesus died and rose from the dead out they go across through the Mediterranean world uneducated fishermen some of them four of them were and began to preach proclaim the good news preach Jesus Christ and many of them lost their life extraordinary change from being Galilean fishermen in a remote part of ancient Israel or Palestine the second episode comes in the next paragraph verses 21 and 22 Jesus is in Capernaum a town in

Galilee not all that important it's right on the edge of the sea of Galilee it's a little border town really from what was then Herod Antipas's territory into Herod Philip's territory it had a tax booth there or nearby it was right on the shore of the sea of Galilee part of the old ancient town for many years was underwater a lot of it's been excavated today and you can see ruins of the synagogue it's a more modern synagogue than Jesus day but it's on the same site as Jesus once it was rebuilt it seems a couple of hundred years later and ruins of some of the houses that are almost next to the ancient synagogue of Capernaum it's a place for the Messiah to go to it's a little backward town but its significance is that it's on a major trade route from Egypt to Babylon all the way up the Mediterranean cutting inland across the Carmel Hills through the Jezreel Valley comes to the Sea of Galilee passes through Capernaum and then goes up through the Golan Heights to Damascus and on around the Fertile Crescent to Babylon this little town pretty inconsequential otherwise had a synagogue

Jesus Jesus goes to the synagogue Jesus clearly could read the scriptures and he was invited as often men would be in a synagogue service to read the scriptures he taught them we're told at the end of verse 21 and we're told in other parts of other gospels that Jesus teaches in other synagogues as well in the early stage of Jesus ministry there's an acceptance of him before it seems he's cast out of synagogues in effect and when the people heard him we're told in verse 22 they were astounded at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority and then notice the little expression and not as the scribes notice that he teaches as one who has authority that is not one who appeals to some authority but that there is an inherent authority for Jesus that they're not used to see the rabbis and preachers of the day would appeal to other rabbis or to other prophets for their authority but Jesus we see in other places would say things like but truly I tell you such and such he has an authority within himself and the listeners acknowledge that they see it they hear it and they marvel at it they're astounded at it and then in the very next episode still in the synagogue he casts out an unclean spirit an act that's fairly typical of Jesus in effect and he does this sort of thing in other parts and again in verse 27 we're told they were all amazed and they kept on asking each other what is this?

a new authority with a new teaching with authority and they kept on asking you can imagine they'd come out of the synagogue and they'd say to their neighbour what is this that we've seen? and then they walked down the street a few steps and they talked to someone else what is all this about?

they are stupefied and amazed at the authority not only of the teaching but of the casting out of an unclean spirit as well and no wonder Jesus' fame spread verse 28 tells us that at once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee here is the beginning of his adult ministry almost and from the beginning the fame begins to spread his name begins to be known the name of Jesus and the authority that he speaks from and it's almost ironic I guess sad perhaps that the first person who really acknowledges who Jesus is other than the announcement of God the Father back in verse 11 of chapter 1 on John the Baptist is the unclean spirit in verse 24 I know who you are the Holy One of God and you see here is a manifestation of Satan and he knows the real Jesus and he declares that to him in the synagogue the other people are asking who is he but Satan's demons know having gone from that synagogue he goes then into the house of Simon and Andrew their brothers with James and John the other two disciples he called and Simon or Peter that is his mother-in-law was in bed with a fever now there's quite a claim that this exact house has been found today because in the ruins of Capernaum within 50 metres of the synagogue ruins there is a little house that had in it what's called graffiti not so much by teenagers rebelling but that is writing on the wall of the house that indicated a worship of Jesus and the carbon dating dates to the middle of the first century AD astonishingly early they've got a hideous church built over the top of this ancient ruined house but it could well be that this was the house of Peter's mother-in-law within a stone's throw of the synagogue we're dealing with real people real places in all of this not just ancient myths and the crowds are getting bigger

[23 : 37] Peter heals sorry Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and we're told in verse 31 that he came he took her by the hand often Jesus touches those who are sick or ill he doesn't keep his distance and often that would make him ritually unclean to touch somebody who is sick or ill or leprous or diseased or something and then the fever left her and she began to serve them the sense is an immediate healing now you know if you've got a fever tomorrow you might feel a bit better and the next day 90% but a couple of days time you're feeling pretty good fevers don't just go at the click of fingers but that's what's happening here that is this is a miraculous not a coincidental healing it goes and it goes straight away and immediately she gets up and serves them that's to show that she's really well so this is significant here and the crowds as a result get bigger that evening at sundown remember Jesus has come from the synagogue so it's the sabbath the sundown brings in the day of work a saturday night now suddenly people can do things and so now the crowd comes and they brought to him all who are sick or possessed with demons the whole city of Capernaum small though it was was gathered around the door the fame of Jesus is building and building and building all the time and at the end of that little section he healed or cured many who are sick with various diseases cast out many demons but he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him now here I think Jesus is trying to dampen down expectation people were expecting a Messiah to overthrow the Romans if these demons went about telling people who Jesus was the expectation would be too confused because that's not why Jesus was come a different Messiah from what most people expected by having been in Capernaum he goes then out to the rest of Galilee from verse 35 to verse 39 to preach the kingdom in effect repeating what's happened in Capernaum but doing so in other towns around the Galilee in the north of the land well this is an unlikely place for the Messiah you imagine if you saw in the age newspaper that Andre Agassi is playing tennis tomorrow on the Holy Trinity Doncaster tennis courts down here even though they're yet to be fixed

I think from the flood the other week or can you imagine that you read in the paper that Russell Crowe will actually be appearing in the hall of Holy Trinity Doncaster up on our stage in the hall around there I mean you don't expect that because they go to the big places Crown Casino and the tennis court the Rod Laver Arena with Jesus it's not quite right he's in the backwaters of the land here is the Messiah in Capernaum see it's a bit like the Pope coming to Australia just to preach in Orbost or somewhere it's not what you'd expect I mean the Pope comes to the MCG in St Patrick's Cathedral and so on it's out of the way Galilee was the pits really it was a sort of rural backwater a long way from from Jerusalem from the capital from the capital what we also see in this opening chapter is not only the crowds building up but little hint already of opposition so he teaches as one having authority and not as the scribes now if you were a scribe you wouldn't like that you'd hear about it with a crowd like that saying this is teaching we've never heard you'd know if you were the scribe who normally taught there at the synagogue in Capernaum and you know how jealous you'd probably feel and how resentful so the opposition is just beginning even in chapter 1 well the next miracle arouses stronger opposition and that comes well Jesus

I should say cleanses a leper at the end of chapter 1 but if we skip over to the beginning of chapter 2 he heals a paralyzed man a well-known story the crowds have become so big but the friends of the paralyzed man can't get into the house where Jesus is teaching and we all know the Sunday school pictures because they're flat roofed houses with steps up the outside people often sleep do their washing on the roof of the house and all those sorts of things so they get up they work out where Jesus is they dig a hole in the sort of mud and twig dried roof you can imagine Jesus underneath and bits falling in and then they lower the man down now this is an extraordinary incident here at the beginning of chapter 2 because Jesus doesn't just heal the man what happens is that he says to him your sins are forgiven verse 5 when Jesus saw their faith the faith of the four men he said to the paralytic son your sins are forgiven but then notice now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts why does this fellow speak in this way it is blasphemy who can forgive sins but God alone at the end of the incident when the man is healed and he gets up and he walks the crowd is amazed we've never seen anything like this they say in verse 12 well here is a complex incident healing that amazes people but healing that is tied to deliberately by Jesus forgiveness of sin and it's very clear if you were a Jew that the only one who could forgive sins was God

God alone no one else could forgive sins the scriptures in the Old Testament made that very clear so for Jesus to say to this man your sins are forgiven he is making a very bold statement about himself indeed he is claiming implicitly to be divine in making that statement your sins are forgiven and it's fair enough that the scribes object to it because forgiving sins is God's work and so in a sense they're making the right statement this man must be blaspheming if he's claiming in effect to be God who does he think he is now if I were to say to you today tonight your sins are forgiven you might say well thank you very much that's very kind of you but how would you know that what I've said is right so you can't tell it's an invisible thing well so too here that's why Jesus ties it to healing because he wants to show not only that he claimed to forgive sin but that he really did it and so when the man got up and walked he got up forgiven and that's why the scribes are irate not just because Jesus was in their eyes blaspheming by claiming to forgive sins but because of the action of healing associated with it that he proves it now blasphemy was in fact a charge that warranted death the opposition against Jesus is building significantly here and we're only at the beginning of chapter 2 and already we're getting inklings of the end the wrath of the Jewish authorities against Jesus Christ and of course we're also getting the inkling at the end because Jesus dies to forgive he's in the business of forgiveness we are seeing the kingdom not only being pronounced but coming into effect here because the kingdom of God is about mercy as we've just sung it's about forgiveness and this man is a foretaste if you like of what Jesus has ultimately come to do to bring forgiveness to sinners and all of us are sinners and from this point on in this section of Mark the opposition begins to increase step by step in chapter 2 verse 13 the next incident

Jesus calls together some more disciples one of them we're told is Levi who's a tax collector a despised fellow now we know that this is on the border Capernaum with the area of Herod and Philip we know there was a tax booth in the town or just down the road from the town that's the significance of the town in effect that it's like a border town here is a despised person who may well have been ripping people off as a tax collector as they went to and fro across the border on the edge of the Sea of Galilee you see God is on the side of outcasts and sinners he welcomes them he doesn't leave them unchanged but he calls to follow Jesus even people like Levi an outcast it's a motley crew of twelve that in the end are assembled there ought to be a huge encouragement to us as Paul said later in the New Testament God chooses what is weak in the world and look at us Jesus then eats with sinners and tax collectors from verse 15 at the house of Levi and now we get an objection we get a sequence of objections here in chapter 2 an objection in verse 16 why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners and again we get a clue to Jesus' mission in his reply those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick

[33 : 03] I have come to call not the righteous but sinners notice there the implication he's not just coming to befriend sinners and leave them as sinners when he says I've come to call not the righteous but sinners it's in the context of being a physician to heal the sick that is he's come to call sinners not to be sinners anymore and to forgive them their sin I say that because so often in our modern church times in the liberal elements of our church people say well Jesus is for sinners so it doesn't matter what you do what your behaviour is Jesus welcomes you with an open arm but it's only half the story because the language here is Jesus welcoming sinners with open arms as their healer to forgive and to heal them from their sin and that's what he's on about well in the next episode from verse 18 Jesus' disciples are not fasting and it raises another objection verse 18 this time why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast but your disciples don't fast now fasting was often a sign of mourning but sometimes in Jesus' day it was a sign of trying to hasten the coming of the Messiah that's why they're not fasting because the Messiah is here and that's what

Jesus replies in effect about verse Jesus says verse 19 the wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them can they that is I'm the bridegroom and the language of the Old Testament would have made it clear what he's claiming here the people of God are the bride of God in effect he's then implicitly claiming divinity and he's raising the ire and the objection of many of the Jewish leaders and authorities round about well this gets heightened in the next section verse 23 onwards on a Sabbath day Jesus' disciples are plucking grain and again the question an objection why Pharisees this time why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath and Jesus' reply directs them to 1 Samuel 21 where David actually was hungry and ate some food on the Sabbath showing them they don't in fact know their Old Testaments as well as they ought to have done and therefore in effect Jesus is justifying himself by saying that he is Lord of the Sabbath in verse 28 the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath and then the first part of chapter 3 a man with a withered hand again on the Sabbath

Jesus now perhaps a bit more provocatively heals this man in the synagogue on the Sabbath and as a result of that in verse 6 the Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him how to destroy him see the sequence of events little inklings of opposition in chapter 1 building in chapter 2 to the beginning of chapter 3 now a plot to kill him already it's a key thread of the story notice too the opposition is coming from all sorts of different leaders of the Jews we've seen the scribes they had a sort of teaching role the Pharisees had a fairly prestigious ruling role in fact the Pharisees we're told elsewhere have come up from Jerusalem to see this Jesus that's a fairly long journey a few days journey that shows the seriousness and the provocation and controversy that Jesus is causing by this stage and notice that in verse 6 it's the Pharisees who conspire with the Herodians to destroy Jesus and normally

Pharisees and Herodians were not friends the Herodians were all in favour of Herod Antipas and trying to put another Herod back on the throne of Jerusalem now that the Roman governor was there in that place the Pharisees were much more religious pious type leaders less political and often these two groups of Jewish leaders would not have much to do with each other but strange bedfellows coming together united in their opposition of Jesus Christ and now from now on it seems that Jesus is no longer part of the synagogue scene or circuit so he goes on in chapter 3 verse 7 onwards to teach a crowd by the lake no longer in the synagogue we're not told that he's kicked out of synagogues but it does certainly seem that there is a shift now as Jesus moves away from teaching in the synagogues to teaching crowds outside and again in the context there verse 11 of chapter 3 again unclean spirits acknowledge you are the son of God the irony is they know who he is the Pharisees and Herodians have got not well not they've got a bit of a clue but they haven't really got it right so what's going on here is that this Jesus is not meeting expectations he's not gracing the tables of the rich and famous he's not keeping the Pharisees laws which were in addition to

Old Testament laws he was blaspheming in their eyes claiming to be God he was ruffling the ecclesiastical feathers but on the other hand he was amazing the crowds and wowing them by his miracles and healing and his teaching as well who is this man well some thought he was mad some thought he was bad that's the language of C.S. Lewis but it's actually the language of Mark if you look down to chapter 3 verse 20 the crowd came together again so that they could not even eat and when Jesus' family heard it they went out to restrain him for people were saying he's gone out of his mind that is even Jesus' family now begin to think Jesus is mad perhaps Jesus' family has come down from Nazareth down to Capernaum by the lake a day's journey or so they think he's mad but then the next line the scribes who came down from Jerusalem even though it's up on the map you would always say in Jesus' day you go down from Jerusalem wherever you go in the land it's just another little way in which the Bible is so accurate in the language it uses the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said he has

[39 : 09] Beelzebul that is Satan in effect by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons you see some people have said in verse 21 he's mad but verse 22 are some people scribes from Jerusalem saying he's bad that's extraordinary here's a man who's healing the sick teaching profound things and people are so confused or blind that they actually put in reverse spots good and evil well here is the one who is good above all other and they say he's an agent of Satan see they're not even saying this is a pretty good man but we don't like some of his things they're saying he's an agent of Satan I think this is an extraordinary thing but it shows us how distorted a sinner's view is because they've confused good and evil totally and said that Jesus is in fact evil he's bad an agent of Satan

Beelzebub literally the lord of the flies another name for Satan worse than even being mad and in all of that they don't even dispute his power they acknowledge that he casts out unclean spirits but they just say that he's bad well Jesus' words in response are important he says in verse 24 if a kingdom or the end of verse 23 how can Satan cast out Satan that is if I'm casting out unclean spirits how can I be an agent of Satan how can Satan be against himself if a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand if a house is divided against itself that house will not be able to stand he's saying to them your logic is wrong you're blind to what's happening here verse 26 if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided he cannot stand but his end has come but no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man then indeed the house will be plundered and what he's saying there in verse 27 is exactly what he's doing he's gone into the strong man's house to Satan's territory he's bound

Satan or that's what he's in the process of doing and he's plundering Satan's property by casting out demons you see that's the mission of Jesus and the kingdom of God it's not a political manifesto to overthrow the Romans it's a spiritual manifesto to overthrow Satan which he finally does on the cross of course he's on about bringing people out from being captives to Satan and that's why the casting out unclean spirits happens and why it's so important in the story Jesus has come to defeat Satan the prince of this world and he's in the process of doing it and that's the kingdom of God coming in and being ushered in and later on at different points Satan's head reappears at each time to be thwarted by Jesus finally and fully on the cross well the rejection and the opposition to Jesus is in effect unsurprising now the tape's being changed at this point they may indeed look but not perceive they may indeed listen but not understand so that they may not turn again and be forgiven now they're difficult verses I don't have time to unpack in full but what Jesus is saying is that what Isaiah predicted opposition has eventuated we shouldn't be surprised by it in effect it's part of the reason why Jesus is preaching and teaching in parables while fleeing the crowd

Jesus sets sail across the Sea of Galilee the final episode of tonight's account the Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake about the size of Lake Ilden but much more compact Lake Ilden is like a sort of cow's udder with tentacles or whatever going all over the place the Sea of Galilee is much more like a pendant jewel or something like that but the same sort of land size full of all sorts of freshwater fish lots of fishermen today as in Jesus day some of his disciples we know are fishermen this is their job they're used to the Sea of Galilee but on the sea this time chapter 4 verse 35 as we heard in the second reading a storm a fierce storm brews up once in a century storm perhaps because even these experienced fishermen were terrified at the storm on the Sea of Galilee Jesus was in the stern of the boat verse 38 asleep and they woke him and said to him teacher don't you care that we're perishing well he woke up he rebuked the wind and said to the sea peace be still the wind ceased and there was a great calm now that's an astonishing story to finish tonight's episode a few years ago

I was on holidays in Wales with a friend and just down the road from the little farmhouse we were staying in was a beautiful lake when it was still and the sun was out the reflections of the Welsh hills were idyllic and we actually went on holidays to this place about three times and each year a friend would try and take photos one year there was no film in the camera another year it was used film we discovered and the third year as he was about to take the photo a boat went across in front and it took well over I'd never really noticed this but it took well over but I had to wait it took well over half an hour before the sea was calm again because the ripples of that one little boat took well over half an hour to calm down now you imagine how long a lake would take to be still from a fierce storm I imagine it would be much more than half an hour but the impression of the story here is that when Jesus says peace be still immediately not only did the wind stop but the sea was still that's astonishing you see Jesus power is not just on the wind telling it to stop that could well be coincidence but miraculously the sea calms straight away now Rob Jell doesn't have that power the Bureau of Meteorology with respect to Vaughan who's not actually here tonight they don't have that power they can't control the weather no one can control the weather well Jesus can no wonder they're amazed at the end of that little account of chapter 4 filled with great awe they said to one another who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him see here is the power of the creator manifest in a human being here is God's power at work there's no other answer you see

[45 : 53] Jesus is demonstrating the power of God to control absolutely the elements of the weather and even his disciples his followers they're amazed they've heard his teaching they've seen the healing the casting out of demons they've been amazed at all of that but this is the icing on the cake for them who is this and see how the question gets raised for us because we read Mark's gospel we're meant to be asking all the time who is this with this authority who has got the authority to teach who has got the authority to heal who has got the authority to cast out unclean spirits who has got the authority to forgive sins who's even got the authority to calm a storm so instantaneously who indeed is he a madman like his family and others thought can he really be bad as the scribes from Jerusalem thought no Mark is wanting us to know in the end truly this is the son of God that was God's announcement in chapter 1 it's the centurion's confession of faith at the end of the gospel and by the end of the gospel

Mark wants you and I as the readers of this gospel to join with that Roman centurion and say truly this man is the son of God more than that that we'll leave everything and follow him well let's praise this one this Jesus the son of God we're going to sing a great hymn and he'll see you through the and he'll see you inire Thank you.

Thank you.