

The Identity of Jesus

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[0 : 00] The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In my near 13 years of ministry, I've preached many, many series, I've lost count.

Themes, or maybe theories from whole books of Scripture, particularly, you know, books, shorter books in the Old Testament and even the New Testament epistles.

But I've never actually taken a Gospel and preached through a Gospel. Well, until this evening. I'm back in track, as you can see, the ETS commitment is almost over.

Not quite, but it's almost over. So I thought it would be appropriate if we spent our Sunday evening, certainly in the foreseeable future, going through Mark's Gospel.

And for a number of reasons. One being that, you know, Mark's Gospel itself, it particularly focuses on the works, on the actions of Jesus.

[1 : 04] And surely that should encourage each one of us. You know, as we seek to be grounded in the Lord Jesus and follow Him in our works, in our actions.

You know, as we seek to follow the Lord Jesus, to be like Him. And as Mark's Gospel shows us, Jesus demonstrates what it means to do the will of God in obedience to Him.

We're thinking of obedience this morning. To obey is better than sacrifice. And very much Mark's Gospel is concerned with the obedience of the Lord Jesus to His Father's will.

And, you know, as we start a new week, we've started a new week in the Lord's Day. Wouldn't it be good just to go into this week with Christ before us?

You know, as we come to worship Him in this evening service, then surely we're to be strengthened in our dwelling on Christ.

[2 : 05] So that we're the more enabled to walk with Him into this week. Now, you know, in the past few months, whether it's we've had preachers from the Old Testament, preachers in the New Testament, I trust as you have as I have, we've been greatly enriched by all whom we've had in our evening services, whether it's been Andy's sermons in Ruth, or remember John McIntosh's sermon in Enoch, Neil MacDonald's sermon a few weeks ago in Jacob.

These have been Old Testament passages that, of course, point us to Jesus. Passages that lead us to the Saviour, of course, through the means of Old Testament truth.

And we rejoice, we rejoice in these faithful sermons preached by faithful men of God. And, you know, having had a good number of Old Testament sermons, passages preached from in our evening services, it might be appropriate if we might say we continue the thread of Scripture and focus directly on the Lord Jesus.

To see Jesus as He has conveyed to us in New Testament light. And so we're going to embark, as I said, in the series in Mark's Gospel to see the Lord Jesus in all His glory, in all His majesty, in His works of righteousness, in His obedience to His Father's will.

It's a fascinating Gospel. I mean, of course, every part of Scripture is God-breathed. But this, remember, is a unique Gospel in the sense that it was written by an individual who wasn't one of the Twelve Apostles.

[3 : 45] He wasn't one who walked with Jesus these three years of Jesus' ministry. And yet, what we see from the internal evidence of the book, and we might also see the external evidence of what we call the writings of the early church fathers, then the evidence, put the evidence together.

And we can see here that this Gospel written by Mark was written as Mark received direct information from Peter.

We might say that Mark was Peter, the Apostle Peter's secretary. Peter informing Mark of Jesus' actions. So Mark writing down Peter's words, Mark selecting the relevant evidence to put together in what one of our former professors once said of Mark's Gospel into this racy, pacey Gospel.

And that's exactly what it is. Because Mark's Gospel gives us a direct account of a select group of Jesus' actions. And they help us to see who Jesus is.

And why? We should be disciples in following Jesus. Mark's Gospel gets to the point. You know, we're not left struggling with minor detail. We're not lumbered with dry as dust history.

[5 : 08] This is the real thing about the real Jesus who lived that real life so that sinners might know real salvation through real faith in Him. So, let's turn to this racy, pacey Gospel.

But let's see three things to consider about Jesus and our response to the Lord Jesus. Three things, three headings. Identity, humility, and trinity.

So, let's think firstly of identity. So, we said Mark gets straight to the point. He gets straight to the identity of Jesus right at the start there. You know, there's no long genealogy or birth narratives of Jesus as in Matthew's Gospel or Luke's Gospel.

There's no long theological description of Jesus as the Word of God as we see in John's Gospel. And of course, these three other Gospels, they've got their own particular emphasis on the identity of Jesus.

But Mark gets straight to the point and we might say straight away with four wonderful things about Jesus that confirms Jesus' identity.

[6 : 17] What are we told? We're told He is Jesus. We're told He's the Christ. We're told He's the Son of God. And that He's directly connected with the Gospel.

Four wonderful things that confirm the identity of our Saviour. We might say, you know, even in that identity parade, four conclusive pieces of evidence that tell us immediately who Jesus is.

Who Jesus is in His uniqueness. I mean, this tells us who it is whom we follow. Who it is whom we're to put our faith in. Who it is whom we serve.

So, we're going to look very quickly at these four aspects of Jesus' identity so that, you know, we might be stopped in our tracks. And in this context of our worship service, to meditate on the person of the Lord Jesus.

He is Jesus. What do we say to the children this morning? His name means Saviour. Secondly, He's the Christ. The Christos.

[7 : 26] The Messiah. The Anointed One. That's what we're singing in Psalm 21 of the King being anointed. Jesus is anointed. The Anointed One of God.

Here's Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who's anointed, but anointed, anointed of God as prophet.

Prophets were anointed in the Old Testament. Prophet to proclaim salvation in Him alone.

He's anointed as priest to offer Himself up as that once for all sacrifice for sin. And He's anointed us, we said, as King to bring in His rule in the hearts of His people.

No wonder Peter, remember, Peter is Mark's secretary. Mark rather, is Peter's secretary. Peter telling Mark of the life of Jesus. No wonder Peter, in his first letter and the very first words of that letter, no wonder he spoke of himself as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Because Peter was identifying himself through the identity of the Saviour, through Jesus. And you know, you can just picture Peter, you're talking with Mark through many, many hours, many hours of discussion about what it was like to be with Jesus.

[8 : 42] And Peter coming straight to the point. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. So Mark wants us to see immediately that this Gospel, this Good News, is connected directly with Jesus Christ, the Saviour, the Anointed of God.

So Jesus is no mere historic figure. He's no mere leader of a world religion. He is the Saviour of the world.

He's the Anointed of God. Because there's no other Saviour. There's no other Anointed Messiah of God. Jesus and Jesus alone is the one whom we serve and whom we're to follow us as disciples.

But, you know, to make it absolutely clear that this Jesus, this Jesus, the Christ, is who He claims to be and who He claimed to be.

Mark tells us immediately that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Son of God. The title of divinity. In other words, making Jesus equal with God.

[9 : 50] Remember, when Jesus was before the High Priest, the High Priest would accuse Jesus of blasphemy when Jesus claimed His being Son of God.

Remember, when Jesus was on trial, that description that Jesus, that identified Jesus truly as the Divine Son of God. Co-equal. Co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is God, very God. Jesus is to be worshipped in all His eternal glory. This is the one who's the proclaimer of the Gospel. Jesus proclaiming good news about Himself.

And if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then who's anyone? Who's anybody to dismiss His claims? Who's anyone to block your ears to the words that Jesus proclaims about Himself as the way, the truth, and the life?

The only way of salvation in Him alone? I mean, remember what we're doing here in this worship service. We're engaging with the words of Scripture.

[11 : 01] We're here to praise and glorify God, to worship God, to do so as we engage with the words of Scripture about Jesus, about the One who's brought good news to hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves.

So contemplate that truth. Even the very first line of this Gospel. This is just what, first line, there's one line, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This is so full of spiritual nourishment for your souls. But then you'll be thinking, well, why hasn't He mentioned the first words, the beginning? Well, of course, we have to look at this.

I mean, we've thought about the identity of Jesus, as Mark tells us, but look at the very, very first word of Mark's Gospel. In fact, it just says in the original beginning, it doesn't actually have the start, it just says beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Beginning. Why is Mark doing this? Why does he write this? Well, you know, in a very direct sense, to begin this Gospel with the word beginning, and then notice how he connects the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, and then the prophecy of Isaiah, prophesying of John the Baptist to come to herald the good news, to make the way to prepare people for the coming of Jesus.

[12 : 27] So, there's that connection between the word beginning and these prophetic words about John the Baptist. John the Baptist preparing people to receive the good news about Jesus Christ.

So, what's the connection? Why does John make this connection? Mark, rather, between John the Baptist and Jesus. Well, look at the connecting word as it is written.

The Old Testament prophecy is pointing to the coming of a messenger who prepared the way of the Lord, announcing Jesus' coming. This messenger, as we said, being fulfilled in John the Baptist. elsewhere in Scripture, in the New Testament, you see the connection between John the Baptist and the beginning of the gospel message. Okay, so the connection between John the Baptist and the beginning of the gospel message.

Look, 16 verse 16, for example. The law and the prophets were until John, John the Baptist. Since then, the good news of the kingdom is preached.

[13 : 31] Or Acts 10 verse 37, and you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed. So it's only after Jesus was baptized by John that Jesus begins his public ministry, that Jesus proclaims the good news of salvation in him alone.

So John the Baptist doing the work of the herald. In older times, you'd have a herald that would go before a king and the herald would announce the arrival of the king. That's what John's doing.

That's what he does. John doing what had been prophesied about him and announcing the coming of the king. The coming of the king who's come to bring in his eternal kingdom.

And then, of course, we see after Jesus is baptized by John that Jesus goes out with a message of salvation, the gospel of good news. But isn't there another way, another way of looking at this opening statement of Mark?

Now, think back to the very, very beginning of the Bible, very start of the Bible, very, very first words of Scripture. You know them. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

[14 : 48] Here's the statement of creation. In the beginning, God. Now, we want to announce good news in the gospel of Jesus Christ because that good news speaks of the new creation.

The new creation through Jesus' work, through Jesus' actions, actions that Mark's gospels about. So, this is the good news proclaimed by Jesus.

This is the good news proclaimed in Jesus. Jesus has come to bring a new creation. New creation, as Paul said, of all who are in Christ.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. Jesus came to bring in the new. He came to bring new hope for all on whom God's favour rests.

So that all who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour can sing that new song of salvation. And Mark's telling us that the new creation of which God is creator has been announced through the coming of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

[15:59] And so, what's our response? What's your response to all this? Surely, it's for you and for me to bow and worship before our God who's made all things new in Christ.

And you who know Him, you who are in Him, you are that new creation through the work of the Lord Jesus in His perfect obedience even unto death on the cross.

So even the quiet of your hearts, even now, give thanks. Give thanks to God. Give thanks to God for the revelation of the Lord Jesus through the proclamation of the gospel of salvation in Christ alone.

And know that the identity that Mark gives us here of the Saviour is an identity that no one else in all of history can lay claim to.

No one else can claim to the identity that Mark gives us here of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only He is as Mark has given us here of that identity so that even at the very sound of these words of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should bring rejoicing into your heart because you know that through Him sinners are saved.

[17:19] And it's for you and I in response to that identity of Jesus to serve Him in all humility. Particularly as, well, the theme of humility comes really next in our thoughts in verse 7 and 8.

Let's read these verses again in the bigger print. 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 baptise you with water and He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. You know, when Jesus spoke of John the Baptist sometime later, Jesus spoke of, actually, of John's humility.

And that humility that was even expressed in John not wearing the kind of clothes that were worn in palaces but clothes that were desert clothing. The camel's hair coat, the leather belt, not just, you know, practical for the conditions, but these items themselves that spoke of John the Baptist's humility.

That's a lesser one before the greater. And even in the food that we see here that John ate, the simple, basic foodstuffs found in the Judean desert.

[18:32] Everything about John, John the Baptist, spoke of His humility in relation to the one He'd come to proclaim. After me, He comes here who's mightier than I, the straps and the sandals.

I'm not worthy to stoop down on time. He'll baptise you with water. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. There's John recognising the divinity of Jesus.

Seeing in Jesus the Holy One sent from heaven to earth come to save His people. And in that knowledge of Jesus, John humbles himself.

John knows he's utterly unworthy of the Saviour. But you know, it's interesting. John isn't the only one in this passage to express humility. What about Mark?

What about Mark himself? You don't see Mark's name mentioned here. In fact, you don't see Mark's name mentioned in the whole of the Gospel. There's only one passing reference to someone who in all probability is Mark.

[19:36] You read in Mark 14, 51 to 52 of a young man who followed Jesus up to the point of Jesus' arrest but then fled when he was seized by those who arrested Jesus.

Mark 14, 51 to 52. But nowhere else in any of the other Gospels is that incident mentioned. It's only in Mark's Gospel. And even then the young man's name isn't mentioned.

We might say here's a mark excuse the pun but a mark of a humble man. And surely then the example of John the Baptist and of Mark and their anonymity well it's a lesson for us all in our relationship to the Lord Jesus.

He must increase. I must decrease. And here's John pointing pointing people away from himself to Jesus.

I mean Mark wrote of Jesus you know to point people to Jesus and not to the author of the words of this Gospel. And likewise so must you and I.

[20:43] You know whether you're a preacher whether you're witnessing as a Christian whether in all the communications that you make for you and for me to point people away from ourselves to the Lord Jesus.

I mean no minister of the Gospel should ever direct attention to self and to self achievement. It's not for me for anyone else to you know somehow seek the praise of man whether it be in self or in his

congregation.

No Christian should ever seek glory for self in the work of the kingdom. And Mark shows us right at the start of this Gospel this necessity to practice humility before the Lord Jesus before Jesus Christ the Son of God.

And let's each one of us me you let's pray for forgiveness for the many times we have sought the applause of man rather than direct any applause to God because it's to him to God be the glory as Mark here gives glory to God as John the Baptist gave glory to God.

And in this racy-pacy recording of Jesus' actions even the setting out of the ministry of the Gospel that Jesus proclaimed you know this is racy-pacy Mark immediately moves on to the identity of Jesus another establishing the identity of Jesus seen in Jesus' baptism that marked the inauguration of Jesus' Gospel proclaiming ministry and here's you know a further telling of who Jesus is and doing it in a very wonderful compact way words are very economical the economy of words and yet so powerful in affirming what Mark set forth at the very start of his Gospel of Jesus' identity being the Son of God and what do we notice in particular verses 9-11 in relation to identity we see Trinity the Trinity God the Father the Son the Holy Spirit

[22 : 56] Mark 1 9-11 in those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan and when he came up out of the water immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove the voice came from heaven you are my beloved Son with you I'm well pleased and bear in mind where Mark puts this episode in the setting you know at the start of his Gospel here it's still at the beginning it's still at the beginning of you know what he's writing because he's dealing with beginnings he's dealing with the beginning of Jesus' ministry proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus alone so what's Mark directing us to consider he's directing us to consider the involvement of God in Gospel proclamation he's showing us the involvement of the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit I mean

Mark's already told us that Jesus is the Son of God but now he shows us that the divine Son of God has been given that divine approval of God the Father and that the divine Holy Spirit has anointed the Son for the work of ministry Father Son Holy Spirit seen in that work of bringing salvation to those who are his this work of redemption this rescue of lost sinners the salvation of peoples from every tribe and nation and language this is the work of the triune God this is the new creation the new creation that's the identity of all who are saved this is the work of God Father Son and Holy Spirit you know earlier we noticed the connection between the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and the establishing of the new creation as Mark tells us in his first chapter but I think there's another connection between the creation narrative and this narrative of the baptism of

Jesus because you remember just in the account of creation in Genesis we're told that the Holy Spirit hovered over the face of the waters when God created the heavens and the earth through his word with the word being the son of God the word of God so what do we find here we find again Father Son the word Father Son and Holy Spirit seen in the proclamation of the new creation as God was active in creation he's active in the new creation and surely again this should bring us to our knees in wonder and love and praise that almighty God God who created the heavens and the earth almighty God who's involved in the redemption of all all peoples all peoples in whom his favour rests that God should so love sinners such as ourselves who are utterly unworthy of salvation none of us can remain indifferent to that awesome work of love the eternal love of God the triune God reaching out to sinners you know think of that perfect love of

God think of the love of the triune God within the Trinity itself Father Son and Holy Spirit and then think of that love that reached out from the Trinity to sinners so we cry out what a saviour I mean Mark rejoiced in that love the love of God Peter rejoiced in the love of God what about you are you in constant awe of that love that should save an undeserving sinner such as yourself such as myself are you rejoicing in the in the saviour whose love within the Trinity is a love that's given to you so that you might live that life of love for God and your neighbour surely we should the more dwell on the on the fact that God the Father Son and Holy Spirit that he should care enough for you to be fully involved in your salvation and this is something you know that we should be constantly dwelling on focusing more and more on us you know as we just take time to contemplate the love of God the love of God the Father that he should send his Son to save sinners through the enabling power of the Holy

Spirit and one more thought one more thought before we close this evening some of you know Professor Mackay Professor Mackay was my Old Testament lecturer at well the then Free Church

College and Professor Mackay once said in our class he said where there's a beginning there's an end he was teaching Genesis 1 where there's a beginning there's an end I mean these words of course tell of the beginning of creation in the beginning at least tell us please suppose there'll be an end of that creation when Jesus returns a new heavens a new earth for all eternity then when you look at the beginning the opening words of Mark's gospel here the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God isn't there also there that presupposition of an end you know a recognition that there'll be a moment when the last sinner is brought into the kingdom of God there'll be that moment when the last word of gospel proclamation will be preached and then no more and the voice of the last preacher will be silent and the full extent of the company of the saved that will be realized and that end well when that end is not even that we're told not even the son knows only the father but we're told that the gospel must be proclaimed until all who are Christ have received salvation and that truly tells us then of the urgency of proclaiming the gospel it tells of the need for you and for me to be ever watchful for you and for me to be on our guard to be ready for [29 : 20] Christ's return are you ready for that are you prepared for his return are you still hesitant to come to the savior who who came to give his life for you to give you eternal life through him I pray that you will all know the one who Mark spoke of here the one who Mark worshiped that you will know Jesus Christ the son of God and that you'll hear the gospel proclaimed and that you'll give your life to him for all time for all eternity amen let us pray Lord we give you thanks for your word your word that tells us clearly who Jesus is your word that tells us clearly what we must do to be saved to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be saved oh Lord may it be that each and every heartless person here gives his or her life to the Lord

Jesus Christ help us then we pray to to be consistent in our faith to be consistent in our practice to look to you to serve you to be obedient to your word and to live for you all the days that you give us here is then as we continue in worship before you now we pray these things in Jesus name amen well let's close in Psalm 145 the second version and the older version Psalm 145 and page 444 of our psalm books and we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 7 O Lord thou art my God and King thee will I magnify and praise I will be blessed and gladly sing unto thy holy name always 1 to 7 Psalm 145 to God's praise estàs and God bless you Thank you Joseph and Mad God bless you of and Can you do I and I will D man on you you Obviously I was you I received tiempo I G Fried D D I