

Who is He?

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[0 : 00] Today we are continuing on in our series in the Gospel According to Mark. And Mark's Gospel is primarily split into two sections. And it's very neat at one level, it's 16 chapters in the whole Gospel.

And the first chapter, first section, ends in the eighth chapter, the chapter before us today, and transitions into the second part of the Gospel. And the first part of the Gospel is really Mark is concerned with showing us the authority of Jesus.

We see that when he first appears, he teaches with authority. The people in the Capernaum synagogue, they said they'd never heard anything like this. This man teaches not like the scribes or the teachers of the law, but he teaches with authority.

And so he had an authoritative word that he was bringing. He would speak often through parables, and he would speak out truths of the kingdom of God. He would speak about lampstands and mustard seeds, and he'd speak about lamps on tables.

He'd speak about sheeps and goats. But all the time, speaking out truths of the kingdom of God in easy-to-understand language that people would relate to for those who would hear.

[1 : 19] He had authority to forgive sin. You might remember when they lowered the lame man through the roof, Jesus said, Son, your sins are forgiven.

And the Pharisees took issue with this and said, no one can forgive sin except God alone. But Jesus said, well, so that you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin, he told the guy, get up, take your mat, and go home.

And so the Son of Man had authority to forgive sin. He had authority over demons and unclean spirits, so much so that often on many occasions, the people who were possessed by them, when they were in his presence, they would fall down on their knees when they saw Jesus, a little bit like someone would fall down on their knees when they were confronted with a king.

So he had authority over demons. The demons knew who he was. When they would see him, they would often exclaim, we know who you are, you're the Son of God. And Jesus would command them to be quiet.

So he had authority over unclean spirits, even over the demoniac from Gethsemane, when that man who could not be bound by chains or iron fetters, whenever he was bound, he would just snap them.

[2 : 42] He lived in the tombs. He cried out night and day. But when he was confronted by Jesus Christ, even when he was still at a distance, he fell on his knees. And he said, I know who you are.

What do you want with me? He knew straight away that this was the Son of God, and he knew the authority that this man had, and asked him not to torture him.

So he had authority over evil spirits. He had authority over sicknesses, all manner of sicknesses. He cured paralytics. He made the lame person walk. He, on one occasion, put his fingers in a deaf man's ears, and he unblocked his ears, and then fruits so he could hear, and loosened his tongue so he could speak again.

He opened the eyes of the blind. So he had authority over all different diseases and sicknesses. He cured a woman who had an issue of blood since she was young. He had authority over life and death.

And he raised in Mark, in the lead up to chapter 8, we see that he raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. So Jesus had this incredible authority, and Mark is really interested in helping us to understand the authority that Jesus Christ has.

[3 : 58] And so he has this authority. He has authority to feed great crowds from small amounts of food. He fed the 5,000, and he only had five loaves, and he had two fish.

And he fed a crowd of 5,000 men, which would have been a lot more when you add women and children. So he fed a large crowd. He had authority to feed this crowd.

And he also had authority over the elements, so much so that one time when he was asleep in the stern of the boat, and the disciples were there, and they were rowing away, and the waves started to come up, and the wind started to pick up, and the waves came into the boat, and they said, Jesus, don't you care that we're all going to die in here?

And he said, don't be afraid. Where's your faith? And he said, quiet, be still, and the storm was completely still, and the water was absolutely placid.

And so all this is with a view. Mark is showing us the authority of Jesus Christ in the first half. He's really showing these things to us, so it will draw the question from us, who is this man?

[5 : 13] Who is this man? As the disciples said, that the wind and the waves obey him. Who is this man? And so that's the first section of the Gospel of Mark, and as we go through chapter 8 today, we will see that there is the transition from the first section of the Gospel into the second section of the Gospel.

And the passage before us today, it starts out with an interesting story about another crowd, a crowd of 4,000 this time. And, you know, some theologians have thought that it's not, it's the same account as the other one, of the feeding of the 5,000.

But that can't be so, because it's in a different geographical location. There's distinct differences in the details. There's only 4,000 men in this one. There's 5,000 in the other.

They're sitting on the ground and not the grass. After he, on this occasion, the feeding of the 5,000, it was five loaves and two fish that he fed the crowd with.

On this occasion, it's 12 loaves and a few small fish. And so there's distinct differences. When he has fed the crowd, he picks up a different amount of baskets, seven large baskets after this feeding and 12 baskets after the feeding of the 5,000.

[6 : 32] So there are these distinct differences which show us that this is definitely, definitely a different occasion. However, there are also incredible similarities.

Now, when Jesus performs miracles, he, I don't know, and if I had Jesus' power, I think I would go around changing a Hyundai XL into a Nissan GTR or something like that.

But when Jesus performs miracles, it's very, very different to our use of how we would perform them. So he's not just performing miracles, but he's also teaching people at the same time.

He's teaching people and he's teaching his disciples things they need to see. And on this occasion, the key to this passage, so for instance, sorry, you know, he says, I am the light of the world and then he opens a blind man's eyes who has been living in the darkness all his life.

He says in John's account of the feeding of the 5,000, he says that he is the bread of God. He's the manna from heaven. And he says that he is the bread of life.

[7 : 42] He says, anyone who comes to me will never hunger and he who believes in me will never thirst. So there's always this thing that Jesus is trying to show something other than just meeting some sort of need.

But no doubt, as we look at the passage today, there is a need of these people. They've been traveling three days. Jesus has compassion on them and he wants to feed them.

But there's a deeper reason that he wants to produce such a similar miracle to one he produced back in chapter six very recently. And that is, if we look back at chapter six and we have a look at what happened after Jesus fed the 5,000, he sends the disciples ahead of him.

He sends them off to Bethsaida. And so they're out on the lake and they're rowing away on the lake. And it's a different occasion to the one where the wind and the waves come in, but the wind is against them.

And the wind is blowing the other direction. The disciples are rowing really hard and Jesus can see them from the shore that they're not really getting that far. And he decides in the fourth watch of the night, he's going to walk out on the lake to meet them.

[8 : 51] And so Jesus walks out. He walks out to see the disciples in the middle of the lake and they get a shock. They're terrified. They scream in terror because they think they've seen a ghost.

And Jesus says, well, take courage. Don't be afraid. It's just me. And so the disciples are just stunned. And Jesus gets in the boat. The wind dies down.

And it says, the disciples were utterly amazed. And then the next verse is what gives us the key to the beginning of our chapter today. It says, the reason they were amazed was for they did not understand about the loaves because their hearts were hardened.

They didn't understand the miracle because their hearts were hardened. So here Jesus is needing to show them something. He's needing to teach them a lesson a second time, which they haven't quite got right the first time.

And as we follow the passage through, you will see that that theme is actually repeated in the miracle he performs with the blind man. There's a blind man there and they go to Bethsaida and there's a blind man and the people bring this blind man to him.

[10 : 05] The blind man, Jesus takes him out of the village and it looks like that Jesus has performed a healing which didn't actually quite work.

So he spits on the man's eyes. He lays his hands on him. But the guy, he says, look up, what do you see? And the guy says, well, I see men but they look like trees walking around.

So it hasn't quite worked. You see, what's happening here is that Jesus is using this illustration to show the disciples something that has just happened with them.

They needed to see that miracle a second time because Jesus was trying to teach them that he is all sufficient. Now, it doesn't quite pay off because as we follow past the miracle, we have a look and there's the Pharisees and they're testing Jesus, disputing with him, demanding a sign.

I mean, probably some of them were present and saw the feeding of the 5,000 but they're demanding a sign. They want to test him. They're not wanting to use faith. They just want to see to believe.

[11 : 17] And Jesus says, a wicked and adulterous, well, he says, this generation wants a sign but none will be given to it. It says in the Matthew version, I think it is, a wicked and adulterous generation wants, seeks a sign but none will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

He also calls them, in the other versions, in Luke and Matthew, he calls them hypocrites and he says, you know, you see, you see the sky when it's red at night and you instantly know that it's going to be a fine day the next day.

You see the sky and it's red in the morning and you know that it's going to be, that it's going to rain. So you can interpret those signs and yet, how is it you can't interpret the sign of the times?

And then he also, in the other version, says you can see a cloud off in the distance in the west and you know that rain's coming when you see that but if you see a wind blowing from the south, you know that it's going to be a hot day.

So you can interpret these signs but you cannot interpret the sign of the times. So, Jesus is quite disturbed about this, that the Pharisees are asking for the sign, he refuses to give it to them and then he says to the disciples who happen to have just had one loaf of bread on them at the time, watch out for the yeast or the leaven of the Pharisees and that of Herod.

[12 : 43] And so the disciples sort of, it's almost comical in a way when you look at it, the disciples start talking amongst themselves and they say, oh, he's saying that because we don't have any bread, we forgot to buy bread.

And Jesus is just amazed, he's like, he's like, guys, don't you get it yet? Do you not understand? Do you have eyes but don't see? Do you have ears but don't hear?

Don't you remember? And he talks about, he brings to memory the two miracles that have taken place and he brings them back to memory and it's then that all of a sudden after performing the miracle on the blind man that the disciples have now finally got it.

They've finally learnt the lesson. And so as we come down the passage, he's talking just quickly back there, he talks about the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod, the yeast of the Pharisees.

Well, that's the yeast of, we learn in Matthew's version that that is their doctrine. The yeast of the Pharisees is their doctrine. Yeast was often spoken about in the scriptures as something which goes in and then works its way through the whole batch of dough.

[13 : 56] And so he's saying, beware of this doctrine of the Pharisees. The doctrine of the Pharisees is of course that they want to see signs, they want proof, they don't want to use faith and they don't want a righteousness which is by faith, they want a righteousness by what they do.

And so this is the yeast of the Pharisees. The yeast of Herod is slightly different. You might remember that Herod, he arrests John the Baptist because John the Baptist had been telling him it was unlawful for him to marry his brother's wife.

And because he was saying it's unlawful for you to marry your brother's wife and Herod went ahead and married his brother's wife anyway, Herodias. Herodias was out to get John the Baptist from then on when John the Baptist was in prison.

Herodias wanted him killed. But Herod protected John the Baptist and it says that he liked to listen to him although when he listened to him he was greatly puzzled.

So here's a man, it says Herod knew John was a holy man and so Herod knows that John the Baptist he's a holy man, he knows he's bringing the word of God but he's not listening to the word of God.

[15 : 10] He's somebody who just hears the word of God but it just goes straight over their head and he's got no interest in that word actually impacting his life or his actions.

So that's the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod slight detour there sorry but now going back to the passage here Jesus now has got the disciples into the place he wants them to be in he says to them who do people say after he's healed the blind man he says who do people say that I am and they say well some say that you're John the Baptist others say Elijah still others say you're one of the prophets and he says but who do you say I am and Peter says well you're the Christ bingo they've finally got it they can finally see who Jesus is they finally understand who this man is and this is how we conclude the first section of the Gospel of Mark is with the disciples at last understanding and seeing clearly who Jesus is but it doesn't last long that moment of glory because straight after

Jesus begins to tell them all that he must suffer he says that he will be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the teachers of the law and that he will be killed and that he will be raised on the third day and Peter takes him aside and he says Lord far be it from you he rebukes him it says in Mark but in Matthew it says he says far be it from you Lord this shall never happen to you and Jesus immediately sees what is going on and we might hear what Jesus says as get behind me Satan as a harsh comment but when we think it through that is exactly exactly where those words have come from because what Peter is suggesting is that Jesus will never have to suffer that Jesus will never have to go to the cross and if Jesus never goes to the cross then humanity is all every single one of us are on our way to hell so what Peter is suggesting is contrary to the plan of God for saving humanity and so of course

Jesus response to that is to say get behind me Satan because that that comment is from the pit of hell he says you don't have your heart on the things of God you've got your heart on the things of man there's no neutral zone you're either set on God or you're not we've either got to be people of the word or we will be people of the world we have to make a choice there and we have to keep on reminding ourselves of who this man is this Jesus and what he has done for us so the disciples hadn't quite got that and so the rest of the gospel of Mark is about why Jesus came and that's what the other guys will be following up on but Jesus says if anyone wants to follow me he has to carry he has to deny himself and carry his cross daily and that means that we have to be people who are willing to suffer in Romans chapter 8 it says we will be glorified with him it says that we will share in his inheritance if we live by the spirit then we are sons and it says if sons then co-heirs and if co-heirs then we will share in his glory so long as we share in his sufferings and so this is the walk of a Christian the more we want to serve God the more we want to stand in the truth the more we want to live for Jesus and the more we want to live by the spirit the more the world will come at us the more the devil will come at us the more everything will come at us to stop us and we will suffer there is no question if you give your life to Jesus and you are determined to live for him and live in the truth you will suffer

Jesus learnt obedience it says in Hebrews through what he suffered and of course that doesn't mean that Jesus learnt how to be obedient it doesn't mean he didn't know how to be obedient he was perfectly obedient but what it says is he learnt the content of what it was to be obedient through the things that he suffered he saw that to be obedient to the father he had to go to the cross he had to give his life he had to be beaten and spat on that's what obedience cost and so this is what the disciples hadn't seen but we also can be in a position on this side of the cross it would be true to say that the disciples never really saw it until Pentecost you might remember in Acts chapter 1 verse 6 when Jesus is about to ascend he says to the disciples say to him at this point Lord are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel they're still looking for this earthly victory they are still looking for a kingdom of this world and that Jesus will overthrow the Roman army and that Israel will be restored and Jesus says well it's not for you to know the times and places that the father has put in place times and seasons that the father has put in place and he says but you'll be given power when the Holy

[20 : 58] Spirit comes on you and so it's not until they receive the Holy Spirit but when they receive the Holy Spirit there's Peter and he's telling out the great things of God he can't hold it in the Holy Spirit comes upon him and all of a sudden everything makes sense all of a sudden he's given a revelation of the cross he's given a revelation of how that fits in with his understanding of the Old Testament and his eyes are fully opened to the realities of the kingdom of God and we can even though we are Christians and we have the Holy Spirit we can quench the Spirit we can grieve the Spirit we have to keep reminding ourselves of the great truths that we are in the eternities that we are in we have to keep reminding ourselves that we worship a risen man we worship a risen Christ we do not worship a dead Messiah and we don't worship somebody who's way off in the ether we worship somebody who is alive and present to us and the fact that he is risen means that we too will rise from the dead the fact that we have his Holy Spirit guarantees us of the resurrection we have and we have to be focused on that we have to keep refreshing ourselves with who we already are not with what we have to do in the future but with what God has already done for us in Christ that's what we have to refresh ourselves with and in so doing we will live accordingly to what we believe because our faith is inseparable from our works

Peter puts it this way he says in his first epistle in 2 Peter sorry in his second epistle 2 Peter chapter 1 he says for this reason make every effort to add to your faith goodness to goodness knowledge to knowledge self-control to self-control perseverance to perseverance godliness to godliness brotherly kindness to brotherly kindness love he says for if these are with you in increasing measure you will neither be unproductive or ineffective in your knowledge of Jesus Christ and he says but anyone who lacks these qualities anyone who lacks these qualities is nearsighted to the point of blindness and has forgotten they have been cleansed from their past sins you see it is the grace of God and being refreshed in the grace of God and being reminded of the cross being reminded of the great eternities that gives us a dynamic power from within to live according to those things that we've been brought into

Colossians 3 Paul says you know set your mind on things above where your life is hidden with Christ not on things below he says for your life is hidden with Christ in God so set your mind on those things that are above because that is where the reality is our eternal reality is in the heavenly realms we've been raised with Christ we will be raised with Christ but we've been raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms so that is where we are that is who we are that needs to be our focus that needs to be what we keep in our sight and I think let me pray I'll leave it at that God bless you Father thank you for what you have done for us in Christ thank you that you are so patient with us thank you that with the disciples you even perform the miracle a second time just so they would understand what they needed to learn

Lord so often we need to learn things a second and third and fourth time but you bear with us Father and we are just so grateful we ask Lord as we go into the week ahead that Lord you will just give us just eyes to see what you brought us into already help us to keep focused on things which are going to remind us of the reality of who we are in you and we ask this in Jesus precious name Amen in Jesus and we are in you and we are in you that to do love we are in you wise to vent God love we are in you and you are my Lord and you politically