

Who is the King?

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[0 : 0 0] The Reverend Dr. Alan Cole was a classical biblical scholar. A biblical scholar. He lectured at Oak Hill Theological College in London and in Moore College in Sydney and Trinity College in Singapore.

He was a missionary, both with the China Inland Mission and CMS in Southeast Asia. He was a founding master of Robert Menzies College at Macquarie University and one-time federal secretary of CMS in Australia.

He was a scholar of both Hebrew and Greek language. He wrote three biblical commentaries, one on Exodus, one on Galatians, and one on Mark's gospel, which has been a significant help for me throughout this series on Mark.

I met Dr. Cole in 1997 while I was a student at Moore College. Although I was totally unaware of who he was.

I was in a New Testament lecture on the book of Galatians, a book that Dr. Cole had written a commentary on. And I'd noticed on previous occasions this elderly gentleman who sat at the back of the lecture room taking notes.

[1 : 1 6] And he didn't appear in any other lectures, so I assume he wasn't a second-year Moore College student. And it seemed a little strange that to be a student, that why was he there?

For me as a student, why is this elderly gentleman there? And in my view, this is a little bit ironic, but a little bit strange, but in my view, he resembled my lecturer.

And I just assumed that this elderly gentleman was coming along encouraging his son as he lectured in this particular subject. And so one day, at this very same subject, this elderly gentleman came in and he sat beside me.

And I struck up a conversation with Dr. Cole, unaware of who he was, but my curiosity got the better of me and I asked him, why are you here? I don't see you in anything else.

Why are you here? And his response to me was, I've had a long interest in the Greek language and in Galatians particular. And I, being totally clueless and potentially the arrogance of youth, I said something to him that went something like this, it's never too late to learn Greek.

[2 : 3 1] And how personally encouraged I was that someone of his stage of life was choosing to pick it up.

Somewhat embarrassed when the guy who was sitting beside me over morning tea said, you idiot, do you have any idea who you were talking to? None whatsoever.

None whatsoever. I was in the presence of one of the great disciples of the kingdom, of the biblical scholarship, the Greek language Galatians, at no concept of who it was that I was sitting beside in that moment.

And is that not the issue as we've been journeying through the first section of Mark's gospel, first eight chapters? Who is this Jesus who we're coming to?

Who is this person we're sitting beside? And of course for us, for the readers, the very first sentence of Mark's gospel answers the question for us. It says, the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

[3 : 40] Jesus is the especially anointed one of God who has the task of redeeming the world back to God. And the very first words of Jesus in his gospel make that clear.

The kingdom of God has come near. God has broken into his world in the person of Christ. So we know who Jesus is, the readers.

Now some of us here might remember the American television series Columbo. I say some of us because it was in the 1970s and 80s. It was a show that popularised, the first of its kind in fact, the inverted detective story.

Which begins by showing us the crime and the perpetrator right from the very start. And the plot therefore doesn't run on the standard whodunit plot of Midsummer murders, that sort of thing.

But instead revolves around the criminal who is finally caught and exposed and it is referred to as the how catch them. How you're going to catch them theme.

[4 : 55] And this is exactly how Mark reads. Mark makes it clear who Jesus is right from the very start for the readers. And then he reveals the details of Jesus backing up the claim of who he is.

And we're following the narrative to find out will people see Jesus for who he is? First five chapters we're seeing that Jesus is staggering divine authority to conquer Satan, to forgive sins, to heal the sick, to tell the sea, the oceans, to be calm and the wind to stop and overcome death.

And later in this chapter which we did get to in our reading he miraculously feeds 5,000 people with a boy's lunchbox and then he walks on water in the middle of this deep lake.

He is consistently through this gospel backing up the claim that Mark says at the beginning he is the Messiah, the Son of God. He's the rescuer and he is the redeemer.

And in fact the two big miracles at the end of Mark 6 are reminiscent of the big act of salvation in the Old Testament the rescue of Egypt the rescue of God's people out of Egypt.

[6 : 15] Three times at the end of Mark 6 we are told that they are in a remote place just like Israel was in the wilderness after the escape. Jesus is the good shepherd teaching and leading his people in the wilderness.

He miraculously feeds his people just like was in the wilderness under Moses. Jesus miraculously crosses the lake just like the Israelites miraculously cross through the divided sea with Moses and Jesus as it says in verse 48 chapter 6 was passing by his disciples.

His glory was passing by his disciples just as God passed by Moses and revealed his glory in Exodus 33. All this is for the disciples to see to see that Jesus is God the Redeemer.

You see Jesus and God of the Exodus events are one and the same. And the emphasis in these chapters is we must see Jesus for who he is.

it's not good enough to make the statement of the earlier chapters. You see it in chapter 3 a couple of weeks ago when Takeshi and John were preaching.

[7 : 38] The religious leaders thought Jesus was bad. His family thought he was mad. The average Australian thinks he's a good bloke. Not good enough.

Again in chapter 3 the Herodians and the Pharisees they plotted to kill him. They teamed up. The Herodians and the Pharisees are like the left wing and the right wing.

They don't agree on anything. But in this case the only thing they do agree on that Jesus must go. And it's not much different as we see in the beginning of chapter 6 here that Jesus goes back to his hometown in Nazareth.

not as a returning Olympian. It says in verse 3 of chapter 6 they took offense at him. So the religious elite the scholars of the day they took offense of him and then he goes to Nazareth which could be called Nowheresville.

It's a humble little village that is hardly mentioned in history at all. Jesus is its most famous resident. These are grassroots people who knew Jesus from a kid and even they're offended by him.

[8 : 51] The word translated offense in verse 3 means that they were scandalized by him. You see to be scandalized is not just we disagree with Jesus he's got an inflated view himself nice bloke but we disagree with him.

It means to totally reject. It means to feel hostility towards Jesus yet everywhere he went crowds gathered Jesus both mesmerized and alienated he attracted and he infuriated he evokes rejection and hostility he scandalized everyone there's no one here that's not scandalized by Jesus but all for different reasons you know it's the same today for various different reasons people are scandalized by Jesus people in the east and eastern suburbs and northern suburbs of Sydney are kind of okay with Jesus and Christianity talking about love and forgiveness and grace we kind of like that aspect of Christianity love forgiveness grace however as soon as you talk about

Jesus being the only true God and saviour of the world that's when the blood pressure starts to rise don't cope with that at all and yet if we plotted picked ourselves up now and move to traditional culture in the in the east and middle east particularly that kind of area and talk about one religion being the only true religion in the world yep that's fine totally tolerate that that's totally fine but you start talking about forgiveness and love and grace they think you've got no integrity at all scandalised by different reasons they think you'd have no sense of honour to think of love and forgiveness every place is offended but offended for different things with Jesus what one culture thinks is too regressive about

Christianity another culture thinks too progressive about Christianity because that just simply means that to stay away from Jesus and the Christian faith just because there's part of your culture thinks that this aspect of Christianity is too regressive or this aspect of Christianity is too progressive that that just means you're intolerant and pretty narrow culturally that's all it means but if Jesus is who he claims to be the son of God crucified risen from the dead comes from heaven from God then he is going to offend everyone in some way that's because he stands outside of this world as the creator of this world he's not conformed to our personal cultural preferences at all and so to accept Jesus is to accept him on his terms which means he will offend and he will consistently offend your cultural sensibilities there will be things that he will say about your priorities and your values that will cause you to rethink think hard and to change he's not comfortable for anyone it doesn't matter if you're left or you're right or you're rich or you're poor or you're eastern or you're western

Jesus will offend you and it's an opportunity for you to change for your good or to resist for your destruction the 19th century Scottish writer George MacDonald wrote this everything difficult indicates something more than your theory of life currently embraces let let me just say that again everything difficult indicates something more than your theory of life currently embraces you see the reason why Jesus makes us uncomfortable is because he challenges our worldview he forces us to expand our theory of life and purpose and its goals so why was his hometown scandalized by him notice what they say about him in verse 3 where did this man get these things what's what's this wisdom what's these miracles he's been doing isn't he just a carpenter don't we know his family we know who this guy is we know who he is and on one level what they're saying is we we can't believe that the

[14 : 30] Messiah who has come to save Israel would come from such humble beginnings remember the exchange of Philip and Nathaniel can anything good come from Nazareth but it's slightly more than that another commentary on Mark written by William Lane in this section he says something really important he says their discernment could not penetrate the veil of ordinariness that surrounded him Laney's saying how could the long awaited Messiah and Redeemer of the world be so ordinary he's just too ordinary this could not be God this could not be the Savior you see the ordinariness of

Jesus his humble beginnings just did not fit their world view of a triumphant Messiah in the same way the ordinariness of Jesus offends the normal human understanding of how salvation works you see every religion in this world offers a salvation that is a liberation from ordinary life ordinary humanness in all other religions ultimately salvation is seen as escape from the shackles of my humanity in some way it's been set free from all human limitations of becoming a limitless free spirit in some cases it's literally a limitless free spirit but in every way it's to remove the limitations I feel as a human being and biblical salvation is the exact opposite it is not an escape from this world out of this world but a transformation of this world the biblical vision of salvation is unique it's

God coming down into our ordinariness not yanking us out of it but coming into it he immersed himself in the pain and in the vulnerability and the suffering of ordinary human life and yet the beauty and the comfort of God coming down into the mess and the ordinariness of this life is just frankly too ordinary for most the humility and the grace of salvation of the Lord Jesus is offensive I cannot tell you the number of times I've spoken to people and said this is the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ let me explain to you nothing that you have done but everything that Jesus done how many times the response has been that what that's it there's got to be something that I do that's it and they walk away it's offensive as is the fact that it takes

God to make such drastic steps in order to save us it's offensive to the human heart to think that I am helpless in my sin and I need God to rescue me surely I contribute something we would all be much happier with the Christian faith if we could walk into heaven with people applauding well done you've achieved so much you see the people of Israel were expecting a mighty messiah not an ordinary man they're expecting someone who would get them over the hump that they're feeling in life being oppressed by the Romans and not someone who's going to pull them out and rescue them from destruction Jesus is offensive he scandalized scandalizes everyone and yet we cannot know what the Christian gospel is if we've never felt the offense of

Jesus if you've never felt it you don't know what the Christian gospel is we must feel the offense but we must never take offense Matthew 11 verse 6 Jesus says blessed everyone who does not stumble on my account in other words blessed everyone who does not feel offense at my account if we take offense of Jesus we cannot know his blessing if our offense of Jesus keeps us from Jesus then he cannot do the great miracle of salvation in our life that's what he's being pointed to here in verse 6 lack of faith in Jesus means no blessing from Jesus we have to receive and we have to embrace Jesus on his terms even with the offense in order to know the blessing of salvation and so Jesus attracted and he infuriated and he unleashed a movement that has done the same ever since and that's what he's preparing his disciples for in verse 11 when he mentions shaking the dust off their feet people are going to be offended by you mind you if you look carefully at the passage

[20 : 17] Jesus is calling us to a highly selective offensiveness Jesus sends the disciples out to minister and in verses 8 to 10 he instructs them not to take a war chest with them he calls them to be dependent upon the people to whom they are ministering it was an active out of respect for those people and out of humility and so notice that they're not just going to help to tell people things about Jesus but they're going to do things they're going to serve and they're going to meet needs they will pour themselves out in serving the people that they've gone to speak to and they will get rejected by those people as well and so he's saying that these disciples should be incredibly attractive in their love for these people and they should be sacrificial in their giving to these people and serving of others but on the other hand the message of

Jesus being the only Lord and Saviour of the world will be offensive the message they bring will be offensive but their love and service of these people will be attractive and this attraction and rejection has been the history of the church Christians are the most exclusive sounding people in the world and that is highly offensive and intolerant in our current society and while at the same time we are the most inclusive acting people in our world in loving those who persecute us so this is the test if we've never faced rejection because of the Christian faith is it because I'm a coward with the gospel if however you are constantly offensive and constantly clashing with people over the

Christian faith is it because you are being persecuted for obnoxiousness sake is it because they don't know love from you at all you see if you add abrasiveness majoring on the minors and acting like the victim all the time and being unwise in the way you speak and if you add abrasiveness to the gospel then you're not going to be attractive to anyone at all if you're offensive but not attractive or attractive but not offensive then something's wrong so where do we get the power to be exclusive sounding but also inclusive acting have a look at verse 3 again you know aren't you a carpenter Jesus that's a put down you know go back to the work shed

Jesus you leave the prophecy stuff to the elites that's the put down but it's not the biggest put down in this text is in verse 3 have a look at it again this is the ultimate put down from his hometown isn't this Mary's son now this is a patriarchal society where the name your descent your lineage of every person is always always traced back through the father never through the mother to call Jesus Mary's son is a subtle put down what you can't hide in a small town is when Joseph and Mary got married in June a baby is born in September you can't hide that in a little village small towns don't forget that sort of stuff ever and so this put down is scathing it's something like

Jesus you are a nobody Jesus we don't even know who your father is you don't even know what your name is Jesus you are Jesus you are an illegitimate bastard Jesus is who you actually are know that you are nobody a person without a father in that culture is a person without an identity at all no identity you are a nobody and the ultimate of this Jesus knew exactly who he was he knew exactly who his father was and yet he went to the cross and became a man without a father he became the ultimate nobody when he said my God my God why have you forsaken me he became a man without a father and on the cross

[25 : 49] Jesus received the only total rejection that can totally really destroy us and that is the rejection of God he stood in our place he took the penalty and the punishment for everything that we have done and deserve by rejecting God consistently by rejecting Jesus consistently he took the rejection he did it voluntarily he did it out of love he got the ultimate rejection so that we can receive the ultimate acceptance well done my son well done my daughter through Jesus we are children of the father sons and daughters we have got a name and we have got an eternal place and it means that we can take whatever form of rejection this world will throw at us it doesn't matter what anyone thinks when you have the love of the king and the acceptance of the father who cares what anyone else thinks so throughout these early chapters of

Mark we the readers have been strongly encouraged to understand who Jesus is to repent to put our faith in Jesus to listen to Jesus to obey Jesus and the second half of Mark 6 is especially calling us to see Jesus the redeemer he's the savior of the world he's the only source of eternal rescue and Jesus faced acceptance and rejection many people were intrigued by Jesus fascinated by him and that might in fact be you right now you might just be very newly fascinated with Jesus might just be right now just the last couple of weeks you're fascinated with Jesus some of you it might be the last 60 years you've been fascinated with Jesus coming to church week in week out fascinated with this Jesus but you find aspects of

Jesus offensive there's bits of Jesus that he says that I just keep it over there just ignore those bits

epil have hundred things t the moment of opportunity was gone whether your fascination with Jesus has been two days, three days 30 years, 40 years you are not in control of your heart you think you are but you're not we do not have power and control over our hearts and so I'm saying to you now if you are open to do something with Jesus but you are afraid to do it even though you know you should do it but you're confused by aspects of Jesus or even offended by aspects of Jesus don't think the window of opportunity is going to be open forever 10 days, 10 months, 10 years 50 years you've been hearing Jesus say obey me, obey me, obey me in this area of life but you've shut it out you've shut it out you've shut it out today is the day to change that don't think the window of opportunity is just going to stay open don't keep putting it off don't wait until the day when you don't find Jesus offensive anymore it will never come or it will come but it will be too late don't reject the king understand who he is repent put your faith in Jesus listen to him and obey him and do it today on your service sheet as we've been doing right through this service right throughout this series of Mark is a brief simple very simple explanation bare basic explanation of what it is of the gospel and a prayer to pray to respond to Jesus today

I want to encourage you to do it don't care whether it's two days of intrigue with Jesus or 60 years of intrigue with Jesus do it today do it today