

Who Is Jesus?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, seeking the Lord's help, please turn with me back to the passage that we had in the New Testament and in the Gospel according to Mark and in chapter 8. And for our meditations! This evening we will be focusing on verse 29. So let us read again Mark chapter 8, verse 29.

And he, that is Jesus, asked him, but who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, you are the Christ.

Who is Jesus? That is a question that people have been answering or trying to answer for the past 2,000 years of human history. Jesus is that major figure in most of the world religions of our day, many esteeming him to be a wise teacher, to be a great prophet, and to be many other things.

He's also a major figure in history. We're living in the year 2025 AD. AD stands for Anno Domini, which is the Latin phrase for in the year of our Lord. But before that time we recognize as BC, which is before Christ. Now yes, some secular scientific and academic publications like to use BCE and CE, before Common Era and Common Era. But the fact of the matter is that it doesn't change history. But that this man Jesus, we based the years of this world based on him and based on his life and based on his birth. And so he's a major figure in religion and also in history. And so he is a truly important man. But is he only an important man? Is he only a good teacher? Is he only a major historical figure? Well tonight we are going to be meditating upon this one verse in Mark as we look to answer that question of who Jesus is. Now there are a few different ways that we can answer this question.

After all, a few different titles have been given to the Lord. But this perhaps is one of the most common of them, that the Lord is the Christ. And so as we work our way through this verse, verse 29, I want us to actually work our way through it backwards. Firstly, we shall be considering the last part of the verse under the title, the declaration, where it says, you are the Christ.

[3 : 0 2] And then after we have considered that, we will consider the question, where it says, but who do you say that I am? And we shall be considering these headings under the theme of how each of these is a key turning point in both this gospel and in also our lives. How the declaration is a turning point in this gospel and how the question is a turning point in our own lives. Let us consider then the first heading, the declaration, you are the Christ. In the very beginning of the gospel according to Mark, we are introduced to this man, Jesus. And Mark's gospel, it moves very quickly in what it has to say.

There's not much detail as such. You have mention of Christ's baptisms, then of Christ's temptations, then his public ministry, and then his public healings in the first 30 verses of the first chapter.

It goes on very quickly, and it can all seem a bit abrupt. But from the beginning of the gospel, we find that people are astonished at this man, Jesus. They're astonished at his teachings, that they're astonished at his healings. And so they're trying to all ponder and wonder, who is this man? Who is this Jesus? He is teaching not like one of the scribes, but as one with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. Who is this Jesus? And as the gospel progresses, you find others seeking to see who Jesus is also. At the end of Mark chapter 4, where you read the account of when Jesus calmed the storm, you read at the end there that the disciples even said, who then is this man, that even the winds and the sea obey him? In Mark chapter 6, when King Herod heard of Jesus and heard of his works, some people were suggesting that he was

Elijah or like one of the prophets. But King Herod was convinced, this is John the Baptist risen from the dead. This is who this man, Jesus, is. Who is this man? And so it's almost like a build-up from the beginning of the gospel all the way up until this point here where we have a declaration. We finally find out who this man is. You are the Christ. That is who Jesus is. He is the Christ. Now, what does it mean that he is the Christ? And why is that really a turning point in this gospel? We often hear of the title Christ being attributed to Jesus. Oftentimes when we speak of him, we speak of him as Jesus Christ.

But firstly, before we consider what it is, we have to make mention of what it is not. Christ isn't Jesus' surname, as many people have come to believe.

[6 : 22] Many people seem to think that since the word Christ is used after the name Jesus, that it's speaking about his surname. After all, in our own context, we all have a Christian name and then a family name, a first name, and then a surname. But in biblical times, they didn't really have surnames in the same sense that we do. They might have functioned quite similarly to us, but there was also a distinction. Some were identified by their tribe. Think of Aaron, the Levite. Others were identified by their parents, Simon bar Jonah, Simon, son of Jonah. Others were identified by their occupation. You think of Matthew, the tax collector, Simon, the magician, Simon, the tanner, and the list goes on. You do have one instance, if you're familiar with the authorized version or the New King James, where it makes mention of John, whose surname was Mark. But that's more speaking of the other name by which he was known. A lot of people in those days had a Jewish name, and they also had a Roman name. Take the apostle Paul, for example. He is Saul to the Jews. And that doesn't actually change after his conversion. He still remains Saul. Whenever he goes into the synagogue, he is Saul. But because he is the apostle to the Gentiles, he is more familiarly known as Paul, because that is his name to the non-Jews. And so if we were to give Jesus a surname as such, it can't be the Christ, but it would probably be Jesus of Nazareth, because that is where he came from.

So if it's not a surname, well, what is it? Well, friends, it's a title. A title is something that describes someone's position. For example, we often refer to ministers of the gospel as reverend or rev. We speak of doctors in this way as well, doctor so and so.

And so Christ is a title. It is describing someone's position. The word Christ, it means anointed one, or one anointed by God. The word also corresponds to the Hebrew word Messiah, Mashiach, which means anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ. And so what this title means is God's chosen one.

Now, what does it mean God's chosen one? Well, from the beginning of the Bible, when mankind fell into sin, Adam and Eve, they tried to hide themselves from God, but they could not. And they were exposed there in their sins. And God found them. And he saw also the devil who had deceived them. And instead of God justly sending Adam and Eve straight into hell, we read of a promise that God made with them, that one day, that one day, the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

And from that time on, as the Bible unfolds, we see that this promised one, that this Messiah, that this Christ is progressively revealed through Abraham, through Jacob, through Moses, and through the rest of the prophets. And they are all speaking about this one who is to come, this one who will redeem all the rebels who have turned their face from God.

[10 : 06] And this is revealed in types and in shadows and in covenants. Adam and Eve received a covering from the Lord with an animal killed to picture how they were to be forgiven. Then we see with Noah that all who were found in the ark were saved. We see with Abraham and Isaac that the Lord will provide an offering. We see God delivering his people from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

We see the people of Israel conquering lands. We see the people of Israel establishing a kingdom. This is all pointing us to the Christ. All of the Bible is pointing us through the various types and shadows. It's pointing us to the reality that one day there will come a Christ who will save his people.

His people will be redeemed and brought from the dominion of darkness to the dominion of his most marvelous light. The Christ to come what was prophesied hundreds and thousands of years but before he came.

It is said that he would be a son of David, of David's lineage. It is said that he would be born in Bethlehem. It was said that he would become incarnate, as we have sung, to publicly teach, to die as we have sung and to be raised again. It is said that he would be God himself as he was to be named Emmanuel, which is God with us. And so in this gospel, as Jesus is proclaimed and declared to be the Christ, the one who was to come, and him completing his work, you see from that time onwards in verse 31, that he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

The focus from this gospel is now set upon the cross. It's no longer focusing on who this man is, but now that we have found out who this man is, it is now set upon the cross of Calvary.

[12 : 26] For that is why the Christ came. The Christ was not going to be, as many of the Jews would have wanted, a political figure who would save them from the tyranny of the Romans. But rather, the Christ was one who must suffer because there is glory in his suffering. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but for those who are saved or who are being saved, it is the wisdom and power of God. How, you might ask, is there glory in this Messiah and this Christ suffering? How is there glory in him dying in the hands of his own creation? How is there glory in one who left his throne in heaven to go to Golgotha and eventually to go to the grave?

How can he help us? What use is a dying Messiah? Why is the focus now upon the cross? Well, friends, it is the cross that brings us redemption.

On that cursed cross, the Christ bore the sins of his people. On that cursed cross, the Christ bore the wrath of God for his people. He bore the hell punishment for hell-bound sinners.

Is it not why Paul, writing to the Galatians later on, goes to say, that that far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world? You are the Christ, the only Savior of sinners, the promised one to come, and therefore we know that Christ came to this world, as we sung in our opening psalm, to do thy will I take delight. He came to accomplish the will of the Father. You are the Christ. You do everything necessary for the salvation of your people. This is the key turning point in the gospel. From this point onwards is now the cross, what the Christ came to do. The declaration, you are the Christ. That brings us secondly to our second heading, the question. Not only is this a key turning point in the gospel, but it's also a key turning point in the lives of each and every one of us. Jesus says before Peter's declaration, but who do you say that I am? This brings us back to the question that we had in the beginning, who is Jesus? This question is a key turning point in our own lives, because how we answer and respond to this question is a matter of life and death. How you answer and respond to this question will determine your eternal destiny. Who do you say that I am? Who is Jesus?

The question of who is, of course, one that many in the Bible got wrong. In Mark chapter 3, we read of the scribes who accused Jesus of being possessed with Beelzebub. Many claim that he was a madman, even many in his own town. That is how some people view Jesus, and also how they view Christians, as mad men and women, mad men and women who have committed themselves to this Jesus, and who even at times like Moses choose rather to suffer affliction than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. They see that they are mad for looking to follow this man rather than their hearts.

[16:27] Is Jesus a madman? Is that who Jesus is? Or perhaps like some others say, is Jesus simply a good teacher? Maybe a wise counselor? There are many who claim that Jesus was a good teacher. After all, he taught, not as one of the scribes, but as one who had authority. And so we have the account of the rich young ruler who came up to Jesus, and he addressed him as good teacher, good master. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

This man acknowledges that Jesus is good, that he is wise, that he knows the way. But how does the account end? This man turns away from Christ. Christ says, one thing you lack.

And he was not willing to do that one thing. And so he turned away. Some of the earliest documents outside of Christian tradition make mention, that make mention of Jesus, they all mention him in a fairly positive way.

You have, for example, the Roman historian Tacitus, who describes Jesus as a virtuous man. The Jewish historian Josephus describes Jesus as a wise man.

These were men who rejected the Christ, yet they still acknowledged that he was a good and wise man. Is this who you say Jesus is? Who is Jesus?

[17:55] Is he simply a good and wise teacher? Who do you say that I am, Jesus asks? Yes, others might say that I am a madman.

Others might say that I am only a good teacher. Others might say that I am like Elijah, or like one of the prophets, or as John the Baptist. But the question really is, who do you say that I am?

It's directed to you personally. Who do you say that I am? This is not a question about what your parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, siblings, what they think of Christ.

This is a question of what you think of Christ. Who do you say that I am? Am I the Christ? Am I the chosen one of God, who was promised to come, and who has done all things necessary for your salvation?

Am I the one who came down from heaven to be born of the Virgin Mary, to live the perfect life for your righteousness, to die that cursed death for your forgiveness, and to rise up again for your justification?

[19 : 05] Who do you say that I am? This question isn't a question to be merrily pondered in your mind, but it is a question to be truly answered.

It says, who do you say that I am? Not who do you think. Many might acknowledge who Jesus is, but they'll say and do nothing about it.

This is not like a question asked in a classroom where the teacher is only looking for one person to stick up their hand and to answer the question.

No, this is rather like being face-to-face with Jesus himself, and him asking you, who do you say that I am? Jesus is wanting to speak to us face-to-face here, but because he knows one day we will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for everything that we have done.

And friends, at that thought, do we not say with the psalmist, Lord, in your presence who can stand if you our sins record? We have all done wickedly.

[20 : 25] We have all sinned. Is that not obvious? There is not one of us who is able to stand as we are before the presence of God and live. And so we marvel, and that same psalmist continues, but yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord.

Our God is a God of infinite love and mercy, and so he has provided a way in which we can be saved. And that way, friends, wherein we can be saved, it's not what we do, but rather it is in response to what Jesus has already done.

That is why this question becomes so important to us. That is why this question is a key turning point in our own lives, because it is a question that each of us can answer regardless of who we are, regardless of our age, regardless of our stage.

This is a question to you. If you're the worst sinner here tonight, this question can be a turning point in your life.

If you spent your whole life in rebellion to the things of God and in rejection of his Christ, this question tonight can be a turning point in your life. If you've grown up in the church, perhaps attended faithfully from Sabbath to Sabbath, but have never said and proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, that this question tonight can be the turning point in your own life.

[21 : 57] You see, the qualification that we need to have this as a turning point of our lives is faith and trust. That's it. Who do you say that I am?

You are the Christ. You are the one who came to save sinners. You are the only one who can bring me back to God.

You are the Christ. Yes, I was conceived in iniquity. Yes, I continue to sin in my life. Yes, I cannot earn my own righteousness before a just and holy, all-seeing God, but I know that you are the Christ.

I know you are the promised anointed one. I know that you are the one who came into this world to save sinners. I know and believe that you are the Christ.

You are the Redeemer. You are the Savior. And as the Christ, I know that you are able to save them to the uttermost who come to God through you. Have you come to know and see who Jesus is?

[23 : 08] Have you come to see that He is the promised Christ who was to come, the one who came to do His Father's will? Well, friends, answer the question that Christ asked.

Who do you say that I am? Don't just think it, but say it. Who do you say that I am? Confess Jesus Christ, friends.

Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved, says the Apostle Paul to the Romans. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Confess Jesus is Christ. First of all, to God. Get right with God, first of all. Cry out to Him. He hears those who call upon Him.

But then, friends, confess Him to those around you. You see, although this question is directed to each and every one of us individually and partially, it often requires a public confession.

[24 : 18] Take our passage for example. Jesus wasn't one-to-one with Peter when He asked this question. There was a group of them. Yet, Jesus still required a declaration.

He required a confession. So may I encourage you tonight to publicly proclaim Christ. That might look like going forward and proclaiming Christ to your elders.

That might look like proclaiming Christ to your family. That might look like standing up for Christ at school, at university, at work. Nailing your colors to the mast, as it were.

That might look like putting the means of grace above your entertainment and above your work. That might look different for each and every one of us, depending on where we are.

But the question that is the same, that is set before us tonight, that we all must answer, is Jesus asking you, who do you say that I am? How will you answer, friends?

[25 : 25] Will you confess the Christ and have Him in this life all the way into eternity? Or will you perhaps not answer yet? Leave it for another time later on.

Waiting for time later. That time that's not promised to you. Friends, don't wait for the time that that is not promised to you. But rather, look to the one who was promised to come and did come.

Look to the anointed one of God. The Christ. The one able to save. The one we glorify and worship today. We all have a great need for Christ.

But we all have a great Christ for our need. Who do you say that I am? You are the Christ. Christ. And so, friends, as we draw to a close, as Jesus asked His disciples this question, so too He is asking us.

And He is asking us because He is offering us to Himself. Jesus is inviting you to Himself. He is commanding you to come. He is showing you that He has done everything for your salvation.

[26 : 40] Friends, you only need to place your faith and trust in Him. It's the simplicity of the gospel. And you know, when Peter made this great declaration to Christ's question, you are the Christ.

It was a very bold statement considering all the circumstances that may have been around Him. As one writer mentioned, it was made when Jesus was in a poor condition, without honor, majesty, wealth, and power.

It was made when the heads of the Jewish nation, both in the church and in the state, refused to receive Jesus as the Messiah, as the Christ. Yet even then, Simon Peter said, you are the Christ.

There are many people today, friends, who refuse to receive Jesus as the Christ. Many in our families, many in our communities, many in our nation.

But despite that, well, we confess and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. The one who was, who is, and who is to come.

[27 : 45] The Holy One of God. May it be so, friends. May you answer Christ's question the same way Peter did.

And may the Lord be pleased to bless our meditations. Amen. Let us bring our service of worship to a close by... ..

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