

WHO IS JESUS?

Christology in the Gospel of Mark

Introduction

- **Author:** According to Papias and Eusebius, John Mark, an associate of Peter, likely wrote this first gospel
- **Date:** Late AD 50s to early 60s while Peter was still living in Rome (1 Pt 5:13)
- **Genre:** Biographical—offering a brief and dramatic narrative of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus
- **Distinctives:** Mark tells us little or nothing about Jesus' birth, up-bringing, or his personality

Introduction

- The **arrangement of events** is not strictly chronological, but thematic to present Jesus as a remarkable and powerful figure
- Mark's **main concern** is to present Jesus' public ministry, teaching, and their impact on others
- Few references to the **OT** compared with other gospels
- **Purpose**: To bridge the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds and to present Jesus as Israel's Messiah in such a way that he is a **true divine hero** for whom the Romans would hold him in high regard

The Message of Mark's Gospel

- “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1)
- “The birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the good news” (Priene inscription in honour of Caesar Augustus)
- Mark challenged the imperial religion of emperor worship and asserted that the good news for the world began with Jesus
- **Mark's primary message** is that Jesus is the son of God and the kingdom of God is at hand (Mk 1:15)

Jesus is the Son of God

- **Baptism:** “And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’” (Mk 1:11; cf. Isa 42:1)
- **The temptation of Jesus:** “At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him” (1:12-13)
- **Proclamation:** “‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (1:15)

Jesus is the Son of God

- The **kingdom of God** conflicts with Satan, for demons recognize him:
- ²² “The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!’ ²⁵ ‘Be quiet!’ said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’” (1:22-25; cf. 3:20-27)

Jesus is the Son of God

- **Power over nature:** “They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” (4:41)
- ⁴⁷ “Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.”
- “Immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’ ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed” (6:47-51)

Jesus is the Son of God

- **Multiplies loaves and fishes:** ³⁹ “Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand” (6:39-44)

Jesus is the Son of God

- **Jesus' true identity** is understood only from the foot of the cross:
- “And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’” (15:39)
- **Jesus is the suffering servant of Isaiah**: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45; cf. Isa 53:4-6, 10-12)

Faith and Salvation

- A **distinctive feature** in Mark's presentation of Jesus is his call for faith and his linking of healing (or salvation) to faith
- **Faith in action**: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (1:15)
- Lowering the paralyzed man through the roof: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (2:3-5; cf 9-12)

Faith and Salvation

- Woman who touched Jesus' coat to seek healing: "He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering'" (5:34)
- The father of the boy in convulsion seeking help: Jesus says, "Everything is possible for him who believes.' Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'" (9:23-24)

Christian Discipleship

- Mark portrays **Jesus as authoritative**. When he called his first disciples, they immediately followed him (1:16-20)
- ¹⁶ “As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him”
- ¹⁹ “When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him”

Christian Discipleship

- **Christians must reflect Jesus' character** in self-denying, cross-bearing discipleship (8:34-38)
- ³⁴ “Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels’”

Christian Discipleship

- **Spiritual transformation is inside-out** (7:15-23)
- ¹⁵ “Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them. ¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ He went on: ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person’”

Christian Discipleship

- **Christian spirituality** is a matter of the heart and is expressed in the love of God (12:30-31)
- “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Christian Discipleship

- **Christian spirituality** is also expressed in how we treat others (9:35-10:16)
- “Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all’” (9:35)
- “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me” (9:36; cf. 10:13-16)
- Jesus against divorce (10:1-12)

Application

- Biblical interpretation is a matter of reading in context and learning to trace and link thematic ideas
- Who is Jesus to you?
- What is faith?
- Note the three aspects of saving faith in Reformed theology (*notitia, assensus, fiducia*)
- How would you share Jesus with someone in a compelling way?