

Jesus' Identity Revealed Mark 1:9-11

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CSI, a television crime drama show from 2000 to 2015, used one of The Who's biggest hits, *Who Are You?* as their theme song. That makes sense, since all crime dramas are basically "whodunits."

The whole idea behind this show was to find out who the murderer was in each episode. But the original song wasn't about a "whodunit," but about personal identity.

After a night of drinking, the song-writer, Peter Townshend of The Who was awakened from a drunken stupor in a doorway in London's Soho district by a policeman asking him who he was.

The song's meaning is not the policeman's question about what his name was, but the deeper question of what Townshend's true identity was.

Into drugs, alcohol, and false Eastern religious philosophies, he was deeply conflicted and confused about who he was, what his purpose was, what he was placed on earth for, and what he believed.

But Mark leaves us in no such confusion about who JESUS was. In fact, the issue of Jesus' identity was the main reason for his Gospel.

This morning we'll see how Mark identifies who Jesus is, explore the theological implications of this, and finally, see what that means for us.

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In the most basic sense, Jesus is God's "*beloved Son*." Remember, the New Testament can never be fully understood outside the context of the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the word “Son,” when used in reference to the long-awaited Messiah, was used in different ways, to tell us different things about Him.

So, let’s see what Mark has to say. Mark 1:9, *“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.”*

In this verse it’s not readily apparent how this relates to Jesus as the “Son of Man,” but it will become clear shortly.

The term “Son of Man” is found 69 times in the Old Testament and was used primarily in two ways.

First, and most commonly, it was used as a poetic reference to humanity in general. We’re all the offspring of another human, (i.e., “sons of men”).

In this respect, the use of the word is usually meant to infer mankind’s weakness. As being inferior to God, of being dependent on God’s care, of being mortal, and of being sinful and untrustworthy.

The key concept to grasp of this usage in the Old Testament is HUMANNESS.

The most important use of this term in the Old Testament is in reference to the coming Messiah. Daniel 7:13-14, *“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”*

Revelation even tells us that Jesus is the One who has been given dominion and glory and a kingdom.

So, the “Son of Man” here in Daniel is Jesus. But the essence of the other usage still applies to the Messiah. It stresses his HUMANNESS.

The term “Son of Man” is used of Jesus in the New Testament 89 separate times in 85 verses and was used to reveal and emphasize His humanity.

In Mark’s Gospel, only Jesus uses this term for Himself. That is, no one else calls Jesus the Son of Man in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus called Himself by this name to identify with humanity and its plight.

The Jews knew the term was a title for the Messiah, but Jesus’ usage of it didn’t mesh with their expectations of a Messiah.

They were expecting a Messiah who would conquer their enemies and rule and reign, as the scripture in Daniel and in other places, prophesied.

As a human, Jesus was born like any other human being. In fact, He probably suffered various human diseases and sicknesses. He also probably experienced human accidents or injuries.

Jesus had human emotions, too. He was also tempted like any other human and ultimately died like any other human.

Look at how Mark portrays Jesus’ humanity. Mark 1:9a, “*At that time Jesus came...*” “Jesus” was His given human name; it was not a title like Christ or Lord.

Mark uses the human, given name of Jesus to emphasize how Jesus shared in our common humanity, since we all have human names.

Second, verse 9 goes on to say that Jesus “*came from Nazareth in Galilee.*”

Now, Nazareth wasn't anything to write home about, religiously speaking. No prophets or spiritual leaders came from Nazareth.

Jesus wasn't from a high spiritual pedigree. He came to Jerusalem as a common carpenter from a practically no-name town, like most people.

The rest of verse 9 says *"and was baptized by John in the Jordan."* John preached the baptism of repentance, but Jesus didn't need to repent. He had never sinned.

Yet, He shared the same heritage and predicament of His Jewish brethren. By humbling Himself and submitting to baptism of repentance, Jesus was identifying with the people as the Son of Man.

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Next, Mark portrays Jesus as the "Son of God."

Mark 1:10-11, *"Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

The phrase, *"You are my Son"* isn't used in the sense as that of a human father and son.

God the Son never had an ultimate beginning, nor did He NOT exist at some point in eternity past, for He is fully God, and God is eternal.

He did, however, have a HUMAN beginning, and hence the title the "Son of God" is descriptive of His entrance in human form in time and space.

Theologians tell us this title was also used to illustrate the great love, God the Father and God the Son, have together with God the Holy Spirit throughout all eternity.

The term Son of God was meant to infer the deity, or the divinity, of Jesus.

Some commentators point out that Jesus often refers to himself as the Son of Man, stressing His identification with mankind, and therefore, they claim, He never claimed to be God.

But nothing could be further from the truth in the Gospels! In fact, Mark is so emphatic about it that it's impossible to read his Gospel without missing this key emphasis.

In fact, Mark proclaims Christ's deity in the very first verse of his gospel by saying, *"The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God"*

In verse 11, the Father testifies that *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased..."*

God does it again in chapter 9, verse 7 at the Transfiguration, where He says, *"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

In chapter 3, verse 11 and chapter 5, verse 7, demons even identify Him as the Son of God.

At Jesus' trial before the council prior to His crucifixion in chapter 14, verses 61-62, the chief priest pointedly asks Jesus, *"Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"*

Jesus answered *"I am"* which caused the high priest to tear his garments and accuse Him of blasphemy.

And finally, we see it at the cross while watching Christ's death. Things like the sun's eclipse, the forgiveness of one thief's sin, Jesus' loving care for His mother.

Then how Jesus prayed, *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,"* and a Roman executioner confessing, *"Truly this was THE SON OF GOD!"*

One has to be blind, or woefully uninformed, to think that Jesus and the Gospel writers didn't see Jesus as the Son of God.

So, it's not surprising that Mark emphasizes what happened at Jesus's baptism, because it was God's clear identification and approval of Jesus as the Son of God.

Remember, Mark's main audience was Romans, and his goal was to convince them, and us, that Jesus was God.

Jesus comes to John to be baptized like any other human, but it immediately becomes apparent that He's not like any other human!

Hundreds, if not thousands, of people came to be baptized by John in the Jordan; but only one had the kind of baptism Jesus had!

William Lane says, *"Many had come to the Jordan to be baptized by John, but only in the instance of Jesus, in whom true submission to God was perfectly embodied, was the "coming up" from the water answered by a "coming down" from above. The cosmic significance of this event is indicated by the vision of the rending of the heavens, the descent of the Spirit and the testimony of the voice from heaven."*

At His baptism, God the Father clearly identifies Jesus as His Son, and the descent of God the Spirit on Jesus was an empowering of God the Son for His chosen task.

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So, what are the theological implications of this “Son” theme? To Understand this we need to understand an important Christmas truth: The doctrine of the incarnation.

You can’t truly understand Christmas, or even the Gospel, without understanding the incarnation. It’s one of the most sublime mysteries of Biblical truth.

“Incarnation” is a term used by theologians to indicate that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh and became fully man.

This resulted in the complete identification of God with man. Not just God “with us” which is what the name Immanuel means, but God with us AS ONE OF US!

You may be thinking, I just can’t understand all this. Well, let me give you an illustration.

Once, while the great American statesman, Daniel Webster, was dining with a company of literary men in Boston the conversation turned to the subject of Christianity.

Mr. Webster stated unapologetically that he believed in the divinity of Christ and trusted in Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection for his salvation.

One of them said to him, *“Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man?”* “No,” he replied. *“I cannot. If I could comprehend Him, He would be no greater than myself. I feel I need a super-human Savior.”*

John Wesley even said, *“Show me a man who can understand the incarnation and I will show you a worm who can understand a man.”*

All the Gospels are infused with the idea of the incarnation, but look at John, the other Gospel besides Mark that doesn't begin with a birth narrative of Jesus.

John speaks in philosophical terms. John 1:1-4, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*

This verse tells us several things about the "Word." First, though John uses the term "Word," verses 2-4 tell us the Word was a PERSON.

Second, these verses teach that He was WITH God, but he also WAS God. He was here at the beginning of the world according to verses 1-2, and all things were made by the Word, including life, verses 3 and 4.

Now this is may be confusing until you go down to verse 14, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Who is the Word? Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ was WITH God, but He WAS (and IS) God.

Jesus Christ was in the beginning of the universe with God, and in fact, it was Jesus Christ who was the creative agent of the universe.

It was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who breathed the breath of life into Adam and Eve and created ALL life.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Light being one of the symbols of God, as opposed to darkness, associated with sin and Satan.

THIS Jesus, the SON OF GOD, God HIMSELF, left the heavens to become a human, to dwell with us sinners and live a life full of grace and truth.

The question is Why? Why was all this necessary? Why is this such an important doctrine in the Christian faith?

Because the incarnation shows Christ's humanity while also fulfilling prophecy, thus verifying God's Word.

But we can't neglect to mention the most important reason for the incarnation, which is: The incarnation was necessary for us to be saved from sin.

At least 70 scriptures, in both the Old and New Testaments, teach that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins, but the blood of an animal wasn't sufficient to pay the penalty for sin.

Only a human can pay sin's penalty for another human. Yet, no human could pay the penalty required since they've all transgressed God's commands and are under the same curse and judgment as all humans.

The answer: Incarnation. Jesus came to earth to be born both as a man and as God so that He could fulfill all God's commandments and be a suitable substitute to pay the penalty for our sins.

What a glorious plan. What a wise and gracious God we have!

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Conclusion

These truths are amazing, and we haven't begun to examine them in detail. We didn't get into the miraculous conception of Christ, His virgin birth, or the hy-po-static union. (Yes, it's a thing.)

Every truth I've shared with you this morning is important. But they're not meant to be minutia for your brain.

Every doctrine, every command, every injunction, every story in the Bible is designed, not just to TEACH us things, but to help us know God better and challenge us to live for Him with greater fervency and love and commitment.

So, what should you do with these doctrines I brought you this morning? First, they should compel you to run to Jesus for salvation.

Jesus, the almighty Son of God, became the humble Son of Man by laying aside all His heavenly privileges to come to this earth and become a man.

But not just so He could be like us, or be with us, or to be an example for us, or show us the way to live, or how to face death valiantly.

He came with one premier purpose above all others: to be a qualified candidate, the only candidate possible in this fallen world, to die for our sins.

Our sins separate us from God. The only answer is the Son of God who became the Son of Man so that He could die for our sins to pay that penalty in our place.

The truth of the incarnation should overwhelm us with a heart of awe and wonder, resulting in praise and worship.

Do something different during this COVID-19 time. Pause each day to remind yourself that the Son of God came to earth to become the Son of Man to live a perfect life to pay our sin debt.

Someone so wise, so wonderful, so compassionate, so loving as God to provide such an amazing way of salvation is worthy of not just our praise, but our very lives.

That's why we should follow Paul's advice in Romans 12:1, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*