

MARK 4:35 to 5:20 – WHO IS THIS JESUS?

This is where we will be today, looking at two extraordinary events in the life of Jesus. So, who is this Jesus? Almost everybody today believes that He was a real historical figure. But the question is, WHO was He? Was He just a religious leader like Mohammad or Buddha? Or was He more than that? It is clear from the passage that we are going to be in this morning who Mark believes Jesus was.

I have a chart up here and I will explain it. Barna Research Group back in around 2020, they interviewed Americans and asked them a question: "Who was Jesus?" What is represented in black (on the chart) is those who said He was God. What is represented in the white is those who are not sure. And then in the middle, the other color, is those who said He was only a religious or spiritual leader. So, you have all adults – all these age groups combined, which represents about 80 percent of the United States population. Now these four age groups are what they looked at. Going from youngest to oldest, the Millennials are those born from 1981-1996; the Gen-Xers are those born from 1965-1980; then the Baby Boomers, those born from 1946-1964; and then there is what we call the Elders, also known as the Silent Generation, those born 1945 and before. They interviewed people and asked them that question (Who was Jesus?). The disturbing trend that we see is – if you start from the oldest ones down here on the bottom right (the Elders) 62 percent from that age group believes that Jesus was God; you go younger from that to the Boomers and we drop to 58 percent; you go one generation younger to the Gen-Xers and that drops to 55 percent; and then to the Millennials that is 48 percent. Do you see the trend? Each ensuing generation believes less and less that Jesus was God. Does that surprise you?

Mark, like the other Gospel writers, has as his goal in writing the account of Jesus's life to make it clear that Jesus is God. Yes, Jesus was a man, He was human for 33 years, but He was and IS God. In the passages we are going to look at this morning, we will see evidence of this. Mark

presents a beautiful picture of both Jesus's humanity and His deity. Let's begin in Mark Chapter 4 and v 35. The setting here that we are going to see beginning in these verses is somewhere on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee.

READ Mark 4:35-36

Jesus has spent the entire day teaching the crowds. From a human standpoint He is very tired. We know from Mark 4:1 that Jesus had been teaching the crowds from the disciple's boat and the crowds were out on the shore. So, Jesus has to project (His voice) in order to teach. That would even take more out of you. Now it is starting to get late and Jesus suggests WHAT to His disciples? Q1: "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." Now, the Sea of Galilee is a lake. They call it a sea, but it is a lake. So, they launch out away from the shore, and begin sailing. It is dusk and a gentle breeze fills the sails. The boat moves slowly through the calm waters. Jesus is exhausted from the long day and He lays down in the stern of the boat and falls asleep. We know that from v 38 which says, "He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion (a pillow)." I am always drawn to the passages in the Gospels, like this one, that show the humanity of Jesus.

Well, everything is going smoothly when suddenly their plans are interrupted.

READ Mark 4:37

Q2: Out of nowhere, what happens? The weather changes. A storm hits. Actually, Mark describes it here as "a great windstorm." The New American Standard [Bible] says, "a fierce gale of wind." This is no small storm. Heavy winds and rain batter the wooden fishing boat. The waves begin to break over the bow. You can just see the disciples, several of them experienced fishermen, frantically trying to get control of the boat. They are busy baling the water out of the boat as fast as they can. And in the middle of all this chaos, where is Jesus? He is fast asleep.

READ Mark 4:38

Q3: In the middle of this life-threatening situation (in their minds anyway) they wake Jesus up and they ask Him what question? “Teacher, do you not CARE that we are perishing?” Do you think Jesus cared? Of course He did.

Have you ever gone through a difficult situation and asked God, “God, do you even care what I am going through?” It seems sometimes that by His silence, He doesn’t. You think about this fierce storm that is raging and here is Jesus, sound asleep through it all. Q4 asks, “Why do you think Jesus was able to sleep and was not concerned?” His lack of concern did not mean He did not care about the disciples, did it? That was not the reason. He is fully aware of the situation, isn’t He? He sees the big picture. Jesus knows that His mission is not complete and that His heavenly Father is going to protect Him until that mission is accomplished. Drowning in the Sea of Galilee is not how it is going to end. It is not part of the plan and Jesus knows this. The disciples, on the other hand, are so focused on the storm – that sounds a lot like us, doesn’t it? – that they do not see things the way Jesus sees them.

Now, I can’t be too critical of the disciples in this situation. Frankly, I am just like they are much of the time. I forget that God has a plan for my life and until He accomplishes it, He is going to guide and protect me. I forget that. It is very easy to lose sight of that when the problems and crises of life hit suddenly. We are focused on the issue and the problem – the immediate problem at hand. Let’s give the disciple some credit here. They at least know where to go for help. Even if they don’t ask the right question, they ask the right Person.

READ Mark 4:38-39

The wind doesn’t just die down. It ceases. There is an immediate calm. John MacArthur put it this way: “No theatrics. No effort. Jesus spoke to the wind, and the wind stopped instantaneously; He spoke to the water, and the water stopped instantaneously. The water and the wind recognized

the voice of their Creator. Just as He would tell death to release Lazarus, He tells the wind and the waves to obey His will."

I couldn't help as I was reading this thinking about Psalm 89. V 9 of Psalm 89 says, "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them" (Psalm 89:9).

Put yourself in the disciples' place at this moment. What would you be thinking if you saw this? This man has control over the weather! If there had been any doubt as to Who Jesus was before this happened, and there should not have been, it just got lifted.

This is a great teaching moment and Jesus ceases upon it, v 40...

READ Mark 4:40

So, what is it that Jesus admonishes His disciples for? Two things...
Q5: First, they were full of FEAR. Specifically, they were afraid of the storm, right? Second, they lacked FAITH, specifically faith in God to protect them in that storm.

READ Mark 4:41

It says that they "were filled with great fear." The word "fear" here means "a mixed feeling of dread and reverence." Why are they filled with great fear? Because they know now (they should have known this before) that God Himself is in the boat with them. That would certainly make you have fear!

Q6: Why doesn't Mark provide an answer to this question that the disciples ask. Mark goes from v 41 right straight to Chapter 5. He doesn't stop to answer the question. Why not? Well, if you read any piece of literature and you have a question and it is not answered, there are one of several reasons for that. First, the author doesn't know the answer. The second possible reason is that he forgot to answer (he got so busy writing that he forgot to answer it) or he is going to answer it later in the text. The third possibility is that the answer is obvious (based on the text). What is

the case here? Did Mark just forget to answer it? No, the answer is obvious.

Who controls the weather? Can Donald Trump control the weather? He may try, but he is not going to be able to, is he? Has anyone you know in the history of mankind ever been able to control the weather? No. Who controls the weather? God. So, what is the answer to their question? It is a rhetorical question. It has an obvious answer... GOD. Only God can do this. The disciples realize that Jesus is more than just another rabbi or a great moral teacher or some sort of a holy man or a healer or a miracle worker. He may be all these things, but Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. HE IS GOD.

Well, the boat continues to sail across the Sea of Galilee toward the southern end, which is in Gentile territory. Mark Chapter 5 picks up there early the next day. The story we are about to read is mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Of these three, Mark actually provides us with the most detail.

READ Mark 5:1-5

Q7: What did Jesus encounter immediately upon His arrival? A demon-possessed man. The man is deranged. He is out of his mind. Today he would have been institutionalized in an insane asylum and placed in a padded cell. Back then they didn't know how to handle such a person. They had tried to restrain him with chains but he broke free. It reminds me of Samson. He had that kind of strength. He was very strong and violent; a dangerous menace to society. The only thing the people in that region knew to do was to isolate this man away from the rest of the population. This man lived in the local cemetery, it says, "among the tombs." He was self-destructive, "cutting himself with stones." We are assuming they were sharp stones. We know from v 2 that the real issue with this man is that he is demon-possessed. He has an "unclean spirit."

READ Mark 5:6-7

Here we see the reaction by the demon to being in the presence of deity. The demon in this man knows who Jesus is. Demons are supernatural beings, so they are well aware of Jesus. The demon calls Jesus by name and they address Him, "Son of the Most High God." So, there you have the answer to Q8. The demon knows. That is the one who makes this statement. In addition to knowing WHO Jesus is, the demon recognizes His authority. This demon knows that Jesus has the power over him and wants Jesus to leave him alone. Q9: What request does this demon make of Jesus? "Do not torment me." The demon knows that Jesus has the power to send it anywhere on earth. Jesus could send it to Antarctica or to the Sahara Desert wherever there are no people; to the middle of the ocean. Or Jesus could send it to the abyss (the bottomless pit mentioned several times in the book of Revelation). The bottom line is that the demon doesn't want to leave the man. It wants to stay put. "Leave me alone, Jesus!"

What I find interesting here in these verses is that while no human had been able to restrain this insane man (because he was too powerful), the demon indwelling him is able to control him. It says in v 6 that the man "fell down before [Jesus]." The demon is forcing him to do this. The same thing happened back in Mark Chapter 3 – "whenever the unclean spirits saw [Jesus], they fell down before Him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God'" (Mark 3:11). So, the demon in this man forces him to fall down before Jesus. He is controlling the man. By doing this, it is, in effect, submitting to the very Son of God.

Well, Jesus has compassion on this poor, ruined shell of a man and He orders the demon to come out.

READ Mark 5:8-10

Q10: What did Jesus ask the demon? "What's your name?" Based on its name, Legion, we learn that this man is not just inhabited by one demon, but by many demons. We can conjecture how many. We don't know. A lot. The demons beg Jesus, "Please don't send us to Antarctica or

the Sahara or to the abyss! Don't do that, Jesus." They suggest another place...

READ Mark 5:11-12

Now, don't ask me why they would want to go into a herd of pigs. Who knows what is in the mind of a demon? But apparently, they view these pigs as a better alternative than where Jesus might send them. I don't think the demons had a clue as to what would happen if they entered the pigs. I don't think they thought this through. But they are asking Jesus to send them into this herd of pigs.

READ Mark 5:13

This must have been quite a sight! This large herd of pigs immediately go berserk and they rush together down the steep hill and drown in the sea! Q11 asks, how many pigs drowned? About 2000 of them. Some people might wonder what happened to the demons when the pigs died? We don't know. It is one of those mysteries in the Bible, right? Mark doesn't tell us. Matthew doesn't tell us. Luke doesn't tell us. It is a mystery. And you know what? It doesn't really matter. What IS important is what happened to the man who had been demon possessed. That is what is really important. And that is what Mark focuses on.

READ Mark 5:14-16

The townspeople are informed about what happened. It does not take long for the word to get out. They flock out there to see for themselves. They see Jesus standing there. They see the infamous crazy man – he is now perfectly sane! They know the history of this man. He is well known. He is clothed and not naked (he had been running around naked, reference Luke 8:27). He is seated and not running around crazy. He's harmless, not dangerous. He's quiet, not screaming and yelling. He's among the living, not the dead. He's peaceful, not tormented. The man has been completely transformed!

And they look over and see all those dead pigs floating around in the water. V 15 says, "and they were afraid."

READ Mark 4:17

Q12: Why do they ask Jesus to leave? Because they are afraid. Afraid of what? Afraid of the unknown. This man, Jesus, has exhibited (based on what the people are saying) a power that they have never seen before. They cannot explain it rationally. They sense that this is something other worldly. Being afraid is the normal reaction that people in the Bible have to God's holiness, to His holy angels, to His messengers, and to the Lord Himself whenever He appears – Old Testament and New Testament. All throughout the Bible you are going to see this reaction. You have to understand that the townspeople here are pagan Gentiles, probably idol worshippers. Being in the very presence of God frightens them. It would frighten me! One commentary suggests that perhaps the people there were afraid of experiencing further financial loss. Maybe, but I think it goes further than just economics. I think their fear is spiritually rooted. "Go away, Jesus! Get out of here," they say. And they were afraid.

So, Jesus gets back into the boat. The man who had been demon-possessed, as you might guess, has a different reaction toward Jesus than the townspeople did. He does not want Jesus to leave, does he?

READ Mark 4:18-19

Q13: Why did Jesus not allow the man to go with Him? Because Jesus has another plan for him right there where he lives. Jesus tells the man, "You stay here and be My witness. You go and tell your friends and family how much the Lord has done for you." That's what witnessing is all about. All you are doing is simply telling others what God did for YOU and how He changed YOUR life. This man has an amazing story to tell, doesn't he?

Well, true faith is evidenced by obedience. Look what happens, v 20...

READ Mark 4:20

The man does exactly what Jesus told him to do. He goes around to all the Gentile cities ("Decapolis" is a reference to 10 cities in that region). So, he goes around to all these cities and he tells everyone who will listen to him his story, how Jesus literally changed his life. Many of the people are his friends and family. Those are the ones he goes to first. They remember the way he was before. So, I'd say that he was a pretty effective witness.

In closing... we saw today that Jesus had power over nature. He calmed that storm, didn't He? Jesus had power over the forces of evil. He threw a whole legion of demons into a herd of 2000 pigs. If someone came up to you and asked you, "Who do you think Jesus was?" Based on what we read here, and in the Gospels, He was definitely more than a good moral teacher, wasn't He? And He was more than just a miracle worker. He was and still is GOD HIMSELF who came to earth in human flesh. Now you can either believe that or not. A lot of people say, "Hogwash! I don't believe that." OK, that is your prerogative. But here it is in holy scripture.

Let's talk about your own life. Have you personally witnessed, have you experienced God at work in your own life? Have you? Your own salvation for starters, right? That's a miracle! How about healing? Does anybody have a testimony about God healing you in your life at some point? I am raising my hand. Oh yeah! How about rescue from danger? Absolutely! How about wisdom in making some hard decisions? More than once. And on and on we could go. We could all stay in here for the next hour and just give testimony after testimony about what God has done for us.

So, not only do you believe who Jesus was and is based on God's word, but you can believe who He is based on your own personal experience with Him, can't you?

I want to close with a verse I really love that goes along with our lesson: "The LORD has done great things for us! We are filled with joy!" (Psalm 126:3). That is why we are filled with joy. Because of what God is doing for us.