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Bridgeway Church
3-14-10

The Man Who is God
Mark 1:1-15

Who is Jesus?

What does it mean to you personally and to the church corporately when we say that **Jesus Christ is the point of it all**? Read and reflect on Colossians 1:15-23 and then re-visit the question.

Discuss the various perspectives on the identity of Jesus found in the following groups. Evaluate each of them from a biblical point of view. Why are they wrong?

Mormonism: "Let me tell you who Jesus was. He was the first-born child of Elohim. He was the product of the physical union between the Father-God and the Virgin Mary. Don't look so shocked. For a time, God and Mary were actually husband and wife and they had sexual relations, as any married couple would, and conceived Jesus! And the good news is that if we work hard enough we too can become sons of God in the same sense that Jesus is. Please, no coffee for me."

Islam: "No, no, no! You've got it all wrong. Jesus is just like Abraham and Moses and Isaiah. He was a prophet of God. But he was not himself God. In fact, he wasn't even the most important of the prophets. Mohammed, who lived 500 years after Jesus, was God's greatest prophet. Besides, Jesus didn't really die on the cross as Christians believe. He was rescued by God and carried to a safe place in the heavens. Since there was no death there was no atonement for sin. Since there was no death there was no resurrection either. Don't you dare disagree with me!"

Jehovah's Witness: "You're both wrong! Prior to his coming to this earth Jesus was *Michael*, the archangel! He's only a creature, the first product of Jehovah God's creative work. When he was born of the Virgin Mary, he was divested of his spiritual, angelic nature and became wholly and exclusively a man. Jesus isn't God. Would anyone like a tract?"

Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon: "You people are so deceived. On the one hand, I agree with those of you who say that Jesus was a mere man. But what you don't know is that he was actually the illegitimate child of an adulterous relationship between Mary and Zacharias, the husband of her cousin Elizabeth. Jesus failed to establish the perfect family on earth so God has sent to us his second Messiah to carry on the work. His name is Rev. Sun Myung Moon. By the way, I've got some nice roses left over that I'll sell real cheap."

Theological Liberalism: "You're all fools! This is the 21st century, for heaven's sake. All of you talk like you live in the dark ages. Common sense alone tells us that Jesus was the natural born son of Mary and Joseph, no different at birth from anyone else. But don't get me wrong. I'm no atheist. In fact, because of his exceptional virtue and humility and spiritual sensitivity, God *adopted* him to be his Son. He endowed him with miraculous powers and through him proclaimed the wonderful message of the Universal Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of Men! You all probably believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, too."

Average unbeliever: "Golly, gee. I always thought Jesus was just a good-old-boy who told us to love everybody and be nice. It's too bad he ended up getting killed like that. But as long as we all believe in the existence of God, does it really matter all that much? Is it really worth starting a neighborhood feud?"

What does Mark have to say in response to our question? Read Mark 1:1-15 and identify as many claims about Christ as you can.

Evaluate and respond to the following statement from C. S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity*, 54ff.):

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: *'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.'* That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the [Son of God](#), or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity*).

Some would add *legend* to Lewis's *liar, lunatic, or lord*, as possible ways of evaluating the person of Jesus. What is your response?

What is the Kingdom of God?

What kind of "kingdom" did the Jewish people of the first century anticipate, and how did this contribute to their response to and eventual rejection of Jesus? Read and reflect on the bewilderment of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:2-6, as well as Jesus' response.

Define the "Kingdom of God", both in terms of what it **is** and what it is **not** . . .

What does it mean to say the kingdom was "*fulfilled*" in the coming of Jesus but not "*consummated*"? What does it mean when, in speaking of the kingdom of God, we say that it is "*already*" but "*not yet*"?

Read and comment on the following statement by Kevin DeYoung:

"We haven't proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom unless we have told people how they can enter into this kingdom. The good news of the kingdom is not simply that God is in the world establishing his rule, conquering his enemies, righting wrongs, forming a holy people for himself, and reversing the effects of sin and suffering. The good news must also include the message that through Christ's wrath-bearing death and his glorious resurrection we can be a part of this kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom is not good news unless we tell people how unrighteous, unholy, undeserving sinners can receive this kingdom through repentance for our sins and faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Kevin DeYoung).