

Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

The Feeding Of The Five Thousand

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Mark 6:30-52

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Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Mark 6:30; that’s on page 841 in your pew Bibles. Now in your Bibles it might look like these are two stories, but it is obvious that Mark meant for us to read them together. Look quickly at Mark 6:51-52 – this is after Jesus has fed the 5000 and joined the disciples in the boat, having walked out to them on the water. Mark says:

he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. (Mark 6:51–52 ESV)

Mark makes the connection between the two stories – he says that their amazement at the end of the day was due to the fact that they had not sufficiently reflected on what had happened earlier in the day. Mark is telling us here to PAY ATTENTION. Look very closely at this story so that you do not miss what it is saying.

Now there is no doubt that this story was understood as massively significant in the early church. It is the only miracle story that is recorded in all 4 of the NT Gospels. It would be impossible to over estimate the influence this story had on Christian theology and liturgy – what we believe AND what we do when we gather together to worship. This story is foundation to Biblical Christianity: It tells us who Jesus is and what it means to be saved. Hear now the Word of the

Lord, beginning at verse 30.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” 37 But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” 38 And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. (Mark 6:30–52 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

I mentioned that this story tells us who Jesus is and what it means to be saved, let’s deal with it according to those categories. We learn a lot about the identity of Jesus in this story.

Who Is Jesus?

The first we learn is that:

1. Jesus is the prophet like Moses

Back in the Old Testament Moses had said that one day in the future God would raise up a prophet like him – he said that in Deuteronomy 18:15:

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen (Deuteronomy 18:15 ESV)

God told Moses this prophet was coming and he went on to say:

I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18–19 ESV)

So in the Old Testament God said to look for a prophet like Moses who spoke the very Word of God and he said when you find him – you need to listen to him! Because not listening to him will bring you under the judgement of God.

Now, Mark makes absolutely sure that we don't miss this. He says:

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because **they were like sheep without a shepherd.** (Mark 6:34 ESV)

That is a direct quote from the Old Testament – from one of Moses' final prayers before he died. He said to the Lord:

“Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” (Numbers 27:16–17 ESV)

Moses prayed for a prophet like him to be sent to lead the people. Mark is saying, Jesus is the answer to that prayer. And then he shows Jesus doing Moses like things. Moses prayed to the Lord and the Lord sent Manna for the people – the bread of heaven – here we see Jesus doing much the same thing. The parallels are impossible to miss, the Bible is saying, Jesus is the prophet like Moses. He feeds and leads the congregation of God.

The second thing that we are supposed to see here is that:

2. Jesus is the shepherd like David

Moses prayed for a prophet like him who would shepherd the people of God – but as the Old Testament went on that prophecy became far more specific. Moses had said that this prophet/shepherd would come from the nation of Israel – from among your brothers – but in Ezekiel 34 we learn that he will come from the family and line of David.

In Ezekiel 34 God rebukes the shepherds of Israel – the leaders of God's people. He says:

“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? (Ezekiel 34:2 ESV)

A good leader, God says, feeds the sheep – but Israel’s leaders have been feeding ON THE SHEEP. They’ve been getting rich and fat by abusing the poor and God has had enough. So he says that he will judge the sheep and the shepherds and then he will reconstitute his people and he will come himself and be the leader. He says that in verse 15:

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34:15–16 ESV)

But he is going to do this through a very special human shepherd. He talks about that in verses 23-24. He says:

I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. (Ezekiel 34:23–24 ESV)

So God is going to lead his people through a human shepherd – my servant David – but here is the thing – David has been dead for hundreds of years when this prophesy was given so everyone knew when the prophet said this that he was speaking of a SON OF DAVID – a great great grandson of David who would rule over God’s people like David and Mark is saying, Jesus is that Son of David. Just like Jesus is the prophet like Moses, he is also the shepherd like David.

The third thing we see here is that:

3. Jesus is the Messianic King

In the Old Testament the Messiah was understood as a King who would rule over his people and bring them into a time of peace and plenty. The Kingdom of God was ONE GIANT BANQUET where the food was free, the wine flowed and the fellowship was never ending. Isaiah 25:6-9 for example says:

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich

food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

(Isaiah 25:6–9 ESV)

Do you see that? Heaven in the Old Testament, is a never ending banquet. Death is no more, sin is no more, God is with us and we are with him – in peace, in plenty, with one another – forever. That is HEAVEN and its not just in the Old Testament – its in the New Testament too! Many of Jesus' parables of the kingdom feature him as the host and us as his guests at an everlasting and overflowing banquet. In the Book of Revelation an angel says to John:

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9 ESV)

So Old Testament and New – heaven is a banquet and the Messiah is host and king – and Mark is saying, Jesus is our host and king and he has begun to lead and feed his people.

Now this may feel like fancy exegesis to you, but it really isn't. Anyone who was even the least bit familiar with the Old Testament would have immediately understood what was going on here, and it is very clear in the Gospels that these people immediately understood what was going on here. They were connecting the dots. They were getting it! Jesus is the prophet like Moses, Jesus is the shepherd like David, Jesus is the Messianic King – they were getting it! In fact in John's version of this story he says:

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. (John 6:15 ESV)

The people got so excited when they began to connect all these dots that they wanted to take Jesus by force and make him king! If Jesus was all that then let's get it on! Let's march on Rome and kill Caesar and throw off the oppressor and begin the Kingdom of God on earth! They were getting it – at least some of it but there was a piece missing that they were not yet able to see.

They didn't understand yet that Jesus was God.

4. Jesus is God

Even the disciples, didn't quite get it – that's why Mark adds the story at the end. It seems that Jesus wanted to hustle the disciples out of the crowd before things got out of hand. People were started to shout revolutionary things and so before the disciples could be further infected by the enthusiasm of the crowd, Jesus gets them on a boat and pushes them out into the lake to begin their homeward journey. He then calms the crowd and dismisses them and he goes off to pray on the mountain. Mark says that around the fourth watch of the night – or 3 am – Jesus begins to go out to the disciples on the lake – they are having trouble. This whole story happens on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee and the disciples are trying to cross from the east side to the west side and this means going across the place where the river empties into the lake – so they were fighting the current and they were fighting the wind – the NIV says:

He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. (Mark 6:48 NIV11-GK)

So Mark says that Jesus went out to them on the water, but then he adds a very odd phrase. He says:

He meant to pass by them (Mark 6:48 ESV)

Now none of the other Gospels say that. Matthew for example says simply:

in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. (Matthew 14:25 ESV)

So what does Mark mean here by saying: “He meant to pass by them”? It seems that Mark is saying that Jesus meant for this to be a display of his divinity – the phrase “passing by” is used in the Bible whenever God displays his glory to human beings. Do you remember when Moses asked to see the glory of the Lord? God said:

“Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, 22 and **while my glory passes by** ... and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.” (Exodus 33:21–23 ESV)

So what Mark is saying is that Jesus meant for this to be a display of his Divinity. He was showing them that he was God – he was passing by in glory.

But they didn't get it – they missed it! Like the crowds, they got that Jesus was the prophet like Moses – check! They got that Jesus was the Shepherd like David – check! They got that Jesus was the Messianic King – CHECK! But they did not see YET that Jesus was God! Mark tells us why:

their hearts were hardened. (Mark 6:52 ESV)

They couldn't put all the days events together! They had their own expectations, they had their own pre-set theology and so they couldn't see what was plainly prophesied in the Bible and what was playing out before their eyes. It shouldn't have been that hard to put this all together – in Ezekiel 34 the promised shepherd is described as BOTH God and the son of David. Right? In verse 15 God says:

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep (Ezekiel 34:15 ESV)

Then in verse 23 he says that DAVID will be the shepherd of the sheep. Well which is it? Will it be God or a Son of David? Did no one seriously consider the possibility that it would be BOTH? That the Messiah would be the Son of David AND God himself? Because this isn't the only place where that is suggested. Think of how Isaiah the prophet describes the coming Messiah – we sing these words every Christmas. He says:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. (Isaiah 9:6–7 ESV)

So he's going to be an eternal king in the line of David and will be called "Mighty God" – was no one putting this together? Well apparently the crowd wasn't and the disciples weren't yet either – because their hearts were hardened.

They didn't yet see, they didn't yet understand that Jesus was everything they had ever hoped for AND MORE. He was the prophet like Moses. He was the shepherd like David. He was the Messianic King. And he was God.

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord – that's what this story is about!

Now I mentioned a number of weeks ago that that's what every story in the Gospel of Mark is about! This story is ultimately about the identity and significance of Jesus – but it is also a picture of the Messianic Kingdom. In the Bible the most common way of describing the Kingdom of God is as a great feast over which God himself is Lord and host. And so this story – like communion itself – is a picture of the kingdom. It is a snapshot and a preview of life under the Lordship of God. So let's use the few minutes we have left to look at this picture. What does this story tell us about life in the everlasting kingdom?

A Preview Of Life In The Everlasting Kingdom

Well, first of all we see that in the everlasting kingdom:

1. We will be led and fed by God

Again the Old and New Testaments sing with a single voice on this matter. Isaiah 25 says:

the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. (Isaiah 25:6 ESV)

Revelation 7:16 says:

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:16–17 ESV)

We read those words at Christian funerals because they remind us of the everlasting Kingdom of God. We will never be hungry there. We will never thirst. For the lamb in the midst of the throne will be our Shepherd – thanks be to God!

The second thing we see in this picture is that:

2. We will be taught by God

In Mark 6:34 it says this:

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34 ESV)

In the Bible God's people are scattered precisely because they are not well taught. False shepherds lead them astray and into ruin. But here Jesus has compassion and through his teaching gathers into one flock the people of God. This was prophesied in the Old Testament.

All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. (Isaiah 54:13 ESV)

Did you know that we will LEARN in the everlasting kingdom? Our minds will be healed from the deception of sin but that doesn't know that we will automatically know everything – we will still have to learn and the Bible says that God himself will be our teacher. Just like the disciples you will one day sit at the very feet of Jesus and you will learn.

Now we already learn from Jesus through the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God – but the Bible promises a fullness of that that is still to come. The Apostle Paul says:

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV)

Doesn't that sound good? One day there isn't going to be any confusion; one day you will have all your questions answered. One day you will sit at the feet of Jesus and you will be taught by the Lord – thanks be to God!

The third thing we see in this picture is that:

3. We will see and know God

We will see on that day what the disciples missed on this day. Let me take you back to that strange saying in Mark 6:48; Mark says:

He meant to pass by them (Mark 6:48 ESV)

We already talked about how that was an Old Testament way of talking about the display of

God's glory and divinity – Jesus was showing the disciples a bit of his glory. Most scholars think that there is a direct allusion here to Job 9:8-11. In that passage Job is talking about God:

who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea... who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number. Behold, **he passes by me**, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him. (Job 9:8-11 ESV)

Job says that his knowledge of God is so partial and imperfect. God does incredible things – things like walking on the water – but Job doesn't really KNOW GOD as well as he should and as well as he would like to. He moves on but I do not perceive him – Mark is saying, this time God didn't move on. He passed by and then – HE GOT IN THE BOAT! God in Christ is DRAWING NEAR. He is closer now – SO MUCH CLOSER NOW - than he has ever been – and at the end of the Bible – in Revelation 22:4 we are told that in the everlasting kingdom the people of God:

will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (Revelation 22:4 ESV)

They will see him and they will know him – thanks be to God!

Lastly in this picture we see that in the everlasting kingdom:

4. We will be at rest with God

This story began with Jesus wanting the disciples to enjoy some rest – do you remember that? And of course they didn't find any rest because there was still so much work to be done. There were still so many lost sheep to be gathered. But this story ends with a promise and a preview and a picture of the rest that is surely to come. Again that's why the Gospels include the story of the journey home at the end of the day.

Now, the disciples are not in mortal danger in this story – this isn't like the story of the storm when Jesus calmed the wind and the waves. They are not drowning in this story – but they are STRAINING AT THE OARS and making painful progress. They are fighting the wind and the current – but then all of the sudden Jesus enters the boat – and listen to what Mark says:

he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. (Mark 6:51 ESV)

John goes one further, he says:

and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. (John 6:21 ESV)

My friends, this is a picture of the Kingdom of God! In our little boat while we wait for Jesus we are making painful progress! We are fighting wind and current and we feel like we are a long way from home. But then all of sudden the Lord comes in all his power and glory. And when he comes – IMMEDIATELY we will be at rest and we will be at the land to which we are going.

This is our promise – this is our hope – and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together.

Note To Worship Leader:

I will likely work the response into the prayer at the end. I intend to say these words as the basis for that prayer:

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.... The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.
(Revelation 22:17-21 ESV)