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The Jesus Identity

Studies in Mark's Gospel

Starter

You are a creative director for the *Snappy Slogans Advertising Company*. Your brief is to persuade people to read Mark's gospel. What ideas can you come up with if your target market is (i) people who are not Christians; (ii) new Christians; and (iii) experienced Christians?

Leaders Introduction

Mark's gospel can be neatly divided up into two parts, chapters 1-8 and chapters 9-16. Chapters 1-8 ask the question, 'Who is this man?' The answer is given by Peter in chapter 8.

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. (Mark 8:27-31)

Having established that Jesus is 'the Christ' it becomes apparent that he is not the kind of Christ that his disciples (or us as readers?) had in mind. So the second part of Mark's gospel answers the question, 'What kind of Christ is Jesus?' As Mark's gospel unfolds, the answer is that Jesus is the Christ who gives his life on the cross as a ransom and then rises from death.

This explains the reason for the title, 'The Jesus Identity'. With apologies to Robert Ludlum¹, our focus will be on the person of Jesus and his identity as the Christ who is crucified and resurrected. As the Christ, Jesus is the ruler of a kingdom—the kingdom of God. He has God's authority to rule all things: nature, people and the spiritual realm. He brings this kingdom near in his ministry, inaugurates it with his death and resurrection and will bring it to completion at his return.

The Program

Our series of studies in Mark's gospel for term 1, 2010 will follow our sermon series closely. Each study will be written on the sermon passage preached on Sunday. The timing of your group's studies in relation to the sermon is open for each group to determine. Studies will be published well in advance, both on the church website and with some paper copies at the rear of the church. The program of sermons will be as shown on the table over the page.

¹ Author of *The Bourne Identity* !

Date	Passage	Preacher
31-Jan	Mark 1:1-20	Jaime Dickson
7-Feb	Mark 1:21-39	Stuart Holman
14-Feb	Mark 1:40-3:6	Jaime Dickson
21-Feb	Mark 3:7-35	Peter Gimbert
28-Feb	Mark 4:1-34	Jaime Dickson
7-Mar	Combined Service	Parish Prayer Night: Wed 10 th March
14-Mar	Mark 4:35-5:43	Stuart Holman
21-Mar	Mark 6:1-56	Jaime Dickson
28-Mar	Mark 7:1-37	Rod Post
4-Apr	Easter Sunday	
11-Apr	Term Break	
18-Apr	Mark 8:1-33	Stuart Holman
25-Apr	Mark 8:31-9:1	Jaime Dickson
2-May	Mark 9:2-32	Stuart Holman
9-May	Mark 10:1-31	Jaime Dickson
16-May	Mark 10:32-11:11	Rod Post
23-May	Mark 11:12-12:12	Stuart Holman
30-May	Mark 12:13-44	Jaime Dickson
6-Jun	Mark 13:1-37	Stuart Holman
13-Jun	Mark 14:1-42	Jaime Dickson
20-Jun	Mark 14:43-15:15	Stuart Holman
27-Jun	Mark 15:16-16:8	Jaime Dickson

This series in Mark's gospel runs across two school terms and is longer than our usual sermon series. I anticipate that we will provide bible studies for the entire series and encourage all groups to complete the studies series. We will meet as Home Group leaders throughout the series where I will seek your feedback on how the studies are working for you. Of course, you should feel free to talk to me any time with constructive feedback.

You will also notice that there are two breaks in the series; one for Easter (4 & 11 April) and another for a special combined service on 7 March. This special service will be an important occasion to consider our direction for the year as a whole parish. It will be followed by our Annual General Meeting. In conjunction with this significant time, we ask all Home Groups, and those who don't usually meet in such groups, to gather for prayer on the evening of 10 March. Home Groups will be cancelled on that week to allow space for this important gathering.