

God with Us

CHRIST IN ALL THE GOSPELS

“Jesus in Mark’s Gospel”

by Desmond Ford

*Mark, by looking to the present,
reveals how Jesus is our Servant.*



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ow we need to say a little bit about Mark.

Matthew points to the past. Matthew addresses those who have anciently been God’s people. He shows how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament.

In contrast, Mark is writing to Roman citizens and presenting things in the present. Mark has one reference to the Old Testament. In chapter one

it is mentioned that Isaiah foretold John the Baptist. There is practically no other reference.

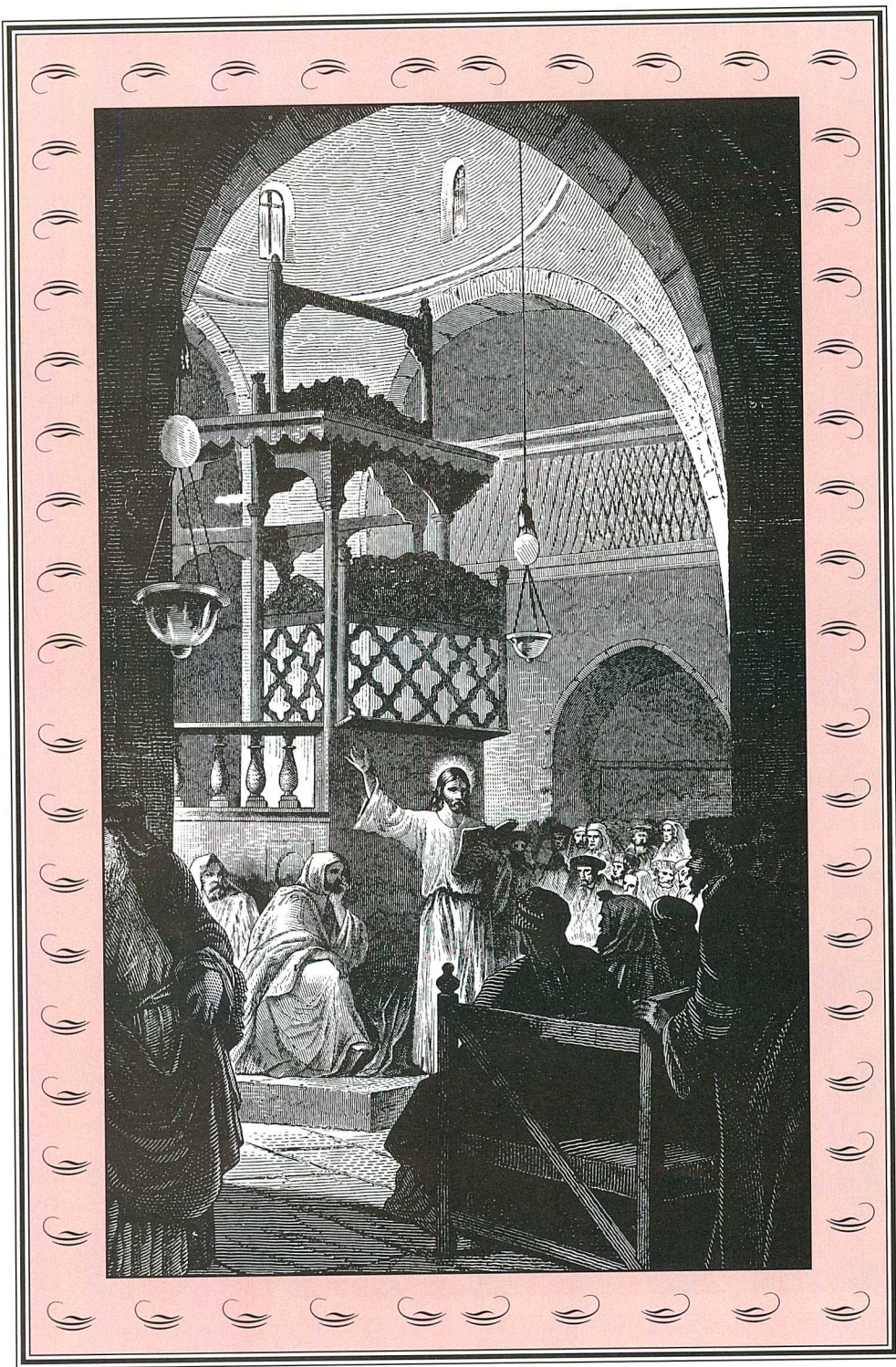
Mark rarely looks back. He is half-Jew, and represents an astounding transition.

Matthew was Jewish, and wrote for the Jews. Luke is a gentile, a Greek. Luke represents the sophistication of the Greeks that influenced the whole world with their culture and attitude. Alexander

the Great taught the importance of the individual while also emphasizing the cosmopolitan view that we live in one world. Luke looks ahead to that world Christianity is about to conquer.

Between Jewish Matthew and Greek Luke (the only gentile writer in the New Testament) is Mark. He is a wonderful transition between Jew and gentile.

His name, John Mark (Acts 12:2),



is Hebrew (John) and Roman (Mark). His mother was Jewish. His father was possibly gentile. Though Mark was Jewish, he wrote his Gospel for the Christians in Rome (several early church historians testify to this). His style is certainly very Romanesque. Mark tells what Jesus did more than what Jesus said. The Roman mind loved action more than abstraction. The Gospel also has many Latin terms.

Jesus Is Servant

Matthew has the words of a King. Early in Matthew's Gospel are the eight Beatitudes pronounced upon those who accept Jesus (Mt 5). Late in the Gospel are the eight Woes on those who reject Jesus (Mt 23).

You do not find these curses in Mark. That is because Jesus is presented as a Servant. A servant does not pronounce curses. Nor is anyone interested

in a servant's genealogy (there is no genealogy in Mark).

There are no Wise Men who come to adore the Baby Servant. Even when Jesus gives his second advent sermon (Mk 13), Christ is never pictured as a King coming to judge the world (as he is in Mt 25).

Mark is full of references to the way Jesus served.

The Serving Hand of Jesus

An example of this is how Mark often says Jesus took someone by the hand. He took Peter's sick mother-in-law by the hand (Mk 1:31). He touches the leper with his hand (Mk 1:41).

No orthodox Jew would ever touch a leper. Such a touch would render the Jew "unclean." But Jesus touches the leper, and Jesus is not contaminated.

When Jesus took our human nature, he was not contaminated by our sinfulness. He is, said the angel Gabriel, "the holy one" (Lk 1:35). Jesus is the spotless, Son of God, who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21). In him was no sin (1 Jn 3:5).

The hand is a symbol of service. That is why Mark is always telling us Jesus took someone by the hand. Again and again Mark tells us what is involved in true service.

Mark tells us Jesus sighed (Mk 7:34; 8:12), how he was filled with grief (Mk 14:34). We are told often that Jesus was filled with compassion (Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2).

It is Mark who tells us Jesus was even interrupted in his own home (Mk 2:1-12). It is Mark who tells us Jesus was interrupted even in his personal devotions (Mk 1:45).

Touch of Faith

Throughout Mark's Gospel we are told that the people Jesus touches are made whole. Interestingly, chapter five tells us of someone who touches Jesus!

Mark tells of the woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed," she thought (Mk 5:28). She touched Jesus and was healed.

Jesus turned and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" (v. 30). The disciples answered, "Look at all these people crowding around you! How can you ask who touched you?" (v. 31 CEV). "Everyone is touching you," they implied.

Ah, but this touch was different. The woman's touch was the touch of faith. Mark is telling us that it's not enough to know that Jesus is the Sacrifice who has delivered us, or the Savior of the world, or the Mighty Worker on our behalf. It's only enough if we put out our hand and touch him.

Not the casual touch of the promiscuous throng that goes to church, sings the hymns, puts money in the offering plate—and then forgets all about religion.

A man arrived at church late. He asked the first person coming out, "Is the service over?" "Not really," was the wise answer. "Now the service begins."

The careless throng may attend church, but they forget it as soon as the last song is sung. They don't know the touch of faith.

It's not enough to be surrounded by religion. It's only enough to touch Jesus and have a personal relationship. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (Jn 6:54 NIV).

No one can eat and drink for you. You must eat and drink for yourself. It must be personal.

Mark portrays Jesus as Servant. This Servant serves with love, compassion, grief, and personal contact. Then Mark turns the tables on us and says, "But you, too, must touch. Touch Jesus."

Jesus Heals the Deaf Man

One more story from Mark and we must close.

In chapter seven we have a typical story of how Jesus served:

Jesus left the region around Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward Lake Galilee. He went through the land near the ten cities known as Decapolis. Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. They begged Jesus just to touch him. (Mk 7:31-32 CEV)

Here again is the personal touch in Mark.

After Jesus had taken him aside from the crowd, he stuck his fingers in the man's ears. Then he spit and put it on the man's tongue. Jesus looked up toward heaven, and with a groan he said "Effatha!" which means "Open up!" At once the man could hear, and he had no more

trouble talking clearly. (Mk 7:33-35)

Here is the gospel in Mark. It's everywhere in the book, but I'm giving you a typical case.

God Removes You from the Crowd

We are all like that man. We are deaf to God. That's how we were born.

Many people who are born deaf cannot speak properly. Years ago, I worked in the field of speech therapy. The first thing you do when someone comes for therapy is test their hearing.

This man represents us all. We are deaf to God and therefore cannot speak for God. So often the words that come from our mouths witness to the devil.

What does Christ do? First, Jesus took the man "aside from the crowd." Jesus removes us from the mob. Dear friends, if you want to be a Christian like everybody else—forget it! Jesus has to take you apart from the multitude. He will set you apart in your thinking and in your behavior. A Christian stands out from the crowd.

You measure a tall building by the shadow it casts. That's the way you measure a person. No shadow, no height. To be a Christian, you've got to be different and you won't be loved because you're different. People fear those who are different.

Healing Sorrows of Christ

Jesus took the man aside from the crowd, touched him, looked to heaven, "and with a groan," healed him.

Our healing is only made possible through the sorrows of Christ.

Jesus points to the source of our problem. There is nothing wrong with us except what is between our ears. It's the way we think that's wrong. The way we think about God, the way we think about ourselves, the way we think about life.

The source of our problem needs to be changed. We must be changed by looking unto Jesus. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2 NIV). By beholding Jesus we become changed.

Whatever gets our attention gets us. What is true for computers—GIGO—is true for the computer between our ears. Garbage In, Garbage Out. What we are feeding on, what we are thinking, what

we are viewing—this affects us.

What are we talking about? What do we love most?

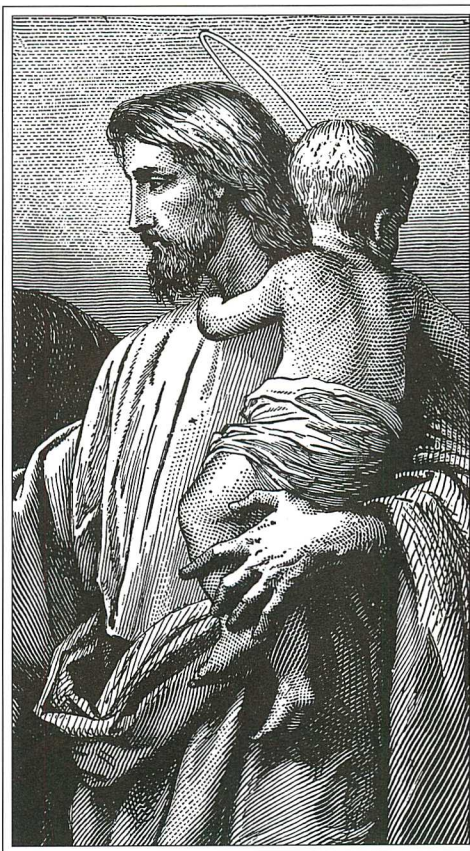
What we love most affects who we are and reflects our destiny. How we spend our time and money and talents and gifts reveals us.

Mark tells us how our Savior deals with us. He separates us from others, he touches us, he reminds us of our problems, he assures us things are going to come right. Then he sighs and looks up to heaven. Our healing comes from there.

Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for these beautiful books, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Give us a deeper understanding of them. May our lives be better as a result, to Your glory. We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen. ♦

[Exciting studies on the Gospels of Luke and John appear next time.]



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