

VOC – August 2015: In the gospel according to Mark we also address this question:

3. Do you understand Jesus?

Dear Listeners,

We continue our journey through the account of the gospel written by *Mark*. He wants us to know *who Jesus is*, how He works, and He wants us to *understand* Him! In his account Mark collected all those events and actions and miracles in order that we would *know Jesus* and accept His Word and *live for Him*. In that pursuit Mark tells us about this work in Jesus' parable of the *Sower*, as we heard last week. After that the Lord Jesus travels north and He joins the disciples in their ship. On the lake they encounter a terrible *storm*; meanwhile the Lord Jesus is sleeping. When the disciples are terrified, in despair they wake up their Master and ask Him: "Master, don't you care if we drown?" Jesus then got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. The disciples terrified asked each other, "*Who is this?* Even the wind and the waves obey Him!"

"*Who is He?*" that's the question Mark wants to answer, also when he tells us about Jesus' power over *demons*, yes even over *death*! He enters the house of *Jairus*, whose daughter had died, but Jesus took her by the hand, He said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl stood up and walked around! At this they were completely *astonished*! No wonder people asked themselves, "*Who is this*, that He has this much power? Wind, water, demons, sickness, even death, submit to His power!" Indeed, *He* has power over death! That's what Mark wants his readers, yes us also, to know and understand: Jesus is *God* and *man*, and He has power over life and death! Then after all this you might expect that people will *know* Him, *accept* Him, and *understand* Him. Not! When you continue reading in Mark's account you will see that even the people in His native town of *Nazareth* don't accept Him! His *disciples* as well need the one lesson after another, as they did with the miracle of the multiplication of the bread: five thousand people ate their fill from 5 loaves and 2 fish!

Well, dear listener, if even these *disciples* who were with Jesus every day need to ask themselves, "*Who is He?*" then we better take this question seriously today! Let's not jump to the conclusion too easily that we *know* Him and have figured out *who He is*. It takes a whole lot more than that! Even though He continued to do *miracles* that no normal person is able to perform, and even though He continues to display *powers* to forgive sins and raise people from the dead, His disciples, the leaders in Israel, and His followers could *not* figure it out. Hence we see them come in chapter 8 to the question, *testing* Him as Mark reports: "they asked for a *sign* from heaven." Then Jesus *sighed deeply* and said, "Why does this generation ask for a miraculous *sign*?" I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it!" Can you imagine, after *all* that's happened! They want to see a *sign*! What *more* do they want?! Even if they had seen *signs galore*, they didn't want to accept Him as coming from *God*! Yes, they even attributed His

power over demons to Beelzebub, the head of demons! And now they want to *test* Him, they want to *tackle* Him! That's why Jesus reacts so strongly: "No way, you won't get a sign!

Perhaps, dear listener, the question sounds familiar to you: "If I would get a *sign* from heaven..., then?" Why did those leaders ask for it, or the people? Were they interested in *Jesus* or just in these *miracles*? Were the Pharisees eager to know Him and also follow Him or just trick Him and trip Him up and condemn Him?! No, Jesus doesn't give in to these sentiments; He has come to proclaim the *gospel of the kingdom of God* that's coming to the earth! That's what He wants people to hear and understand! That's what He wants people to accept and believe! Yes, also His *disciples* need to learn this and understand it. They, too, have a hard time doing so, despite all the words and works, despite all the preaching and performance of miracles! Even though they had seen the miracle of the multiplication of the 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed the 5,000, a miracle repeated later on when Jesus multiplied 7 loaves for 4,000 people, they still worried about the fact that they didn't have any bread in stock! They sure needed Jesus' teaching in word and deed, and thankfully he compassionately did so!

"If I would receive a *sign* from heaven, then I will believe..." Is that what you're thinking, dear listener? Well, just consider all the signs I have mentioned in this meditation and see how different the reactions of the people. Would *yours* or *mine* be any different? Unless you *accept* the Word of God and *believe* the words of Mark in this account of the gospel! "If I would receive a *sign* from heaven, then ...!" You know, that could easily be an *escape*, a *cop-out*, evading the appeal of the Lord Jesus that you accept Him as He reveals Himself! That's how the Pharisees dealt with it: they didn't *want* to know Jesus in order to acknowledge Him, profess Him, and believe in Him; they wanted to *tackle* Him, *attack* Him. Nice *excuse* that would be: "Okay, if I don't get a sign then I don't have to believe in Him either...!" Yes, sure! No, what we see in Mark is that the Lord Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem, the centre of power and authority in Israel, and the question becomes more and more pressing: "*Who is He?*"

That question, dear listener, is important for you and me too: *Who is Jesus?* What do *you* believe about Him? You will have to find the answer to these questions and respond in word and deed accordingly! It is a matter of *life and death*, you know! Just like the disciples and the leaders, we can be busy with all sorts of earthly questions and mundane needs, yet what are you doing with your life in the sight of *death*! What are you doing with Jesus who has the *power over death*? Do you now understand how important it is to know Jesus, to understand Him, and to believe in Him? Well, that's next week's question: "Do you *believe* in Him?" Stay tuned!

Thank you for listening