

CCEA GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

CHRISTIANITY THROUGH
A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL
OF MARK



Mary Nethercott

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75 Glossary

Exam practice answers at

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1 The identity of Jesus

Christ/Messiah

The opening verse of Mark's Gospel – 1: 1

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'This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

Mark opens his Gospel by calling Jesus both the **Christ (Messiah)** and the Son of God. By using these two titles for Jesus right at the start of his Gospel Mark shows that these are the two titles he thinks are most important in describing who Jesus is.

No one title is adequate to describe a person. The same is true of Jesus. Jesus was called many things in his lifetime and each of those titles contributes to an understanding of who he really was.

Revision tip

Understanding the background to the title Messiah is important as most titles have some connection to the Jewish understanding of Messiah.

Christ The Greek word for 'the anointed one': Messiah in Hebrew. Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament.

Messiah The promised deliverer of the Jewish nation prophesied in the Hebrew Bible. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter's declaration about Jesus – Mark 8: 27–33

REVISED ☐

Jesus and his **Disciples** were near Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus asked them 'Tell me, who do people say I am?'

They answered, 'Some say that you are John the Baptist... others say that you are **Elijah**, while others say that you are one of the prophets.'

*The people recognised Jesus as being like a **Prophet**, reminding people of God's message – but they did not recognise him as being the promised Messiah.*

He asked them 'Who do you say I am?'

Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'

Jesus ordered them '**Do not tell anyone about me.**'

Jesus then began to teach the Disciples 'The **Son of Man** must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life.'

Peter took Jesus aside and began to scold him.

Jesus then scolded Peter saying 'Get away from me **Satan**... Your thoughts don't come from God but from human nature!'

Peter takes the lead as spokesman for the group and acknowledges Jesus as the promised Messiah.

This is a feature of Mark's Gospel known as the Messianic Secret.

Jesus is referring to himself when he uses the title Son of Man in his first Passion Prediction.

Meaning the one who tempts people to do the wrong thing.

Disciples Followers of Jesus.

Elijah A Hebrew prophet who many Jewish people believe will return to Earth before the coming of the Messiah.

Prophet A person who explains the message and meaning of God's word for the present day.

What does this passage tell us about the identity of Jesus?

Peter's declaration about Jesus is a defining moment in the life of Jesus and the Disciples. Up until this point, Jesus' identity has been questioned and some of the religious leaders have rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. Only the evil spirits have recognised the identity of Jesus. Now Peter calls Jesus the Messiah (Christ). After Peter's declaration, the question 'who is Jesus?' is now answered through his words and actions. Jesus speaks directly about his suffering and death. Jesus cannot be the Messiah fully without suffering and the **resurrection**.

- Jesus declares he is a suffering Messiah, which is not what the Jewish people expected, they had expected a great warrior or a priest.
- Peter does not understand that Jesus must suffer, he has not understood the identity of Jesus. Jesus says Peter's thoughts come from men not God – what he means is Peter has not grasped the full meaning of Jesus' Messiahship.

Jesus said he must suffer, which means that his death was part of God's plan. For first-century Christians who were facing **persecution** this event would have given them hope, as they may have believed that their sufferings also had a purpose (even if they did not understand it). Christians today who suffer may see their suffering in a similar way.

Resurrection The Christian belief that Jesus rose again three days after his death.

Persecution Treating people with hostility and hatred; can be sanctioned by a government.

Passion The Passion of Christ is the story of Jesus Christ's arrest, trial and suffering. It ends with his execution by crucifixion.

Passover Jewish festival that remembers the escape of the ancient Israelites from Egypt.

Temple The building in Jerusalem where Jewish people worshipped and offered sacrifices to God; the Temple was destroyed in AD70.

The Messianic Secret

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus wanted to keep his identity as Messiah a secret. This may have been because:

- 1 Jesus did not want people following him for the wrong reasons such as just for his ability to heal. He wanted people to follow him because they believed in him and his message.
- 2 Messiah was a dangerous title to use in a Roman-occupied world. The Roman authorities saw the Messiah as a threat to their power. Jesus wanted to be free to preach his message and carry out his mission without being arrested.
- 3 Jesus was not the military, warrior Messiah that many Jewish people were expecting. His understanding of being the Messiah was that of a suffering servant.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem – Mark 11: 1–11

REVISED

Jesus' entry into the City of Jerusalem six days before **Passover** marks the beginning of the **Passion** Narrative; the story of Jesus' suffering, crucifixion and death. Many Jewish people tried to visit the **Temple** in Jerusalem at Passover. It was a special festival. The Romans were on high alert fearing a riot by the Jewish people who were looking for freedom from the Romans. It was a tense time as patriotic feelings were high.

This was required if an animal was to be used for religious purposes.

The Disciples and Jesus approached Jerusalem near Bethpage and Bethany and came to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus sent two Disciples on with the instructions 'Go to the village there ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a colt tied up **that has never been ridden**. Untie it and bring it here. And if someone asks you why you are doing that, tell him that the Master needs it and will send it back at once.'

They found the colt tied to the door of a house and as they were untying the colt some bystanders asked what they were doing.

They answered as Jesus told them and **the bystanders let them go**.

Jesus may have made a previous arrangement with the owner of the colt.

They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over the animal and Jesus got on.

People spread their cloaks on the road, others cut branches in the fields and spread them in front of Jesus on the road.

Jewish people believed the Messiah would be a descendant of the great Jewish King David.

The people began to shout, 'Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! **God bless the coming Kingdom of King David**, our Father! praise God!'

Jesus went to the Temple and looked around.

As it was late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve Disciples.

What does this passage tell us about the identity of Jesus?

Jesus arrives near Jerusalem, the place of his death. The entry into Jerusalem is filled with symbolism, which identifies Jesus as the Messiah. However, as with Peter's declaration, Jesus does not identify himself with the popular Jewish idea of Messiah. The crowd may not have been very large as a scene like this would have attracted the attention of the Roman soldiers who were on the lookout for any trouble at Passover time.

Christians remember the entry into Jerusalem on **Palm Sunday**.

- Jesus is the humble, gentle, suffering Messiah riding into Jerusalem on a colt and not on a horse as a warrior King.
- Jesus fulfils the **prophecy** of Zechariah in the **Old Testament** that the coming Messiah will be a religious figure 'humble and riding on a donkey'.
- The Messianic secret is now being revealed.
- By referring to King David, the people are recognising Jesus as the Messiah. In Jewish belief the Messiah would be a descendant of King David – Son of David.
- It is unclear if the crowd really understood the kind of Messiah Jesus was. By the end of the week they were calling for his death. This shows the changeable nature of people.

Palm Sunday The Sunday before Easter Sunday when Christians remember Christ being welcomed into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Prophecy The foretelling or prediction of what is to come. Something that is declared by a prophet.

Old Testament The first 39 books of the Bible.

Exam practice

Why was the entry into Jerusalem an important event?

[5 marks]

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Son of David

Blind Bartimaeus – Mark 10: 46–52

REVISED

Jericho is on the pilgrim's Passover route to Jerusalem, so had plenty of passing pilgrims who might give charity to a blind beggar.

They came to **Jericho**, and as Jesus was leaving with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind **beggar** named Bartimaeus son of Timaeus was sitting by the road.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!'

Many of the people scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.'

They called the blind man. 'Cheer up!' they said. 'Get up, he is calling you.' So, he threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him.

'Teacher,' the blind man answered, 'I want to see again.' 'Go,' Jesus told him, 'your faith has made you well.'

At once he was able to see and followed Jesus on the road.

Bartimaeus displayed great faith in asking for Jesus' mercy and this faith persists after being told to be quiet by the crowd. He abandons his cloak (used for begging) to go to Jesus and was told that his faith had saved him.

Bartimaeus uses the title 'Son of David' for Jesus. This means that Bartimaeus recognised Jesus as the Messiah. Such a public display of Jesus' identity was dangerous, especially so close to Jerusalem and the feast of Passover. The Romans would have been on the lookout for any possible signs of a Jewish uprising.

Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the road, suggesting that he's now a new disciple.

Bartimaeus was an outcast. His illness meant he had no choice but to beg for his survival.

What does this passage tell us about the identity of Jesus?

The **miracle** contains a rarely used title, 'Son of David'. This is a Messianic title, which has the same meaning as Christ/Messiah. In Jewish belief the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. Son of David literally means descendent of King David. The key meaning in this miracle, however, is that Bartimaeus, a blind man, recognised the identity of Jesus. This can be contrasted with the failure of Jesus' chosen disciples to recognise who Jesus was.

Miracle A remarkable and inexplicable act or event, e.g. a healing which is believed to be an act of God.

Exam practice

'Mark's Gospel shows Jesus as a very different kind of Messiah from Jewish expectations.'

Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

[5 marks]

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