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They Came to Him From Every Quarter

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They Came to Him from Every Quarter

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They Came to Him from Every Quarter

His vibrant life and ministry, after thirty quiet years of obscurity, exploded with the teaching and healing activities described in the Gospel of Mark, chapter one. The Old Testament said He would come, and now, after many hundreds of years, the New Testament says He is here, God’s Son, Jesus of Nazareth. At the conclusion of an action-filled chapter one, Mark states that “they came to him from every quarter” (Mark 1:45).

Although the reference here is to geography, one cannot read the New Testament Gospels, noting the many kinds of people He touched, without sensing in Mark’s statement an accurate summary of the entire ministry of this Jesus, the Christ. It is because of these varying reactions from all kinds of people in every situation of life that I want you to spend the next few minutes studying with me the reactions of those who saw, heard, and knew this unique character in history.

To stress His finite historical existence, a man among other men, there were those, like the early disciple Philip, who said, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Although born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet Micah had promised, King Herod’s bloodthirsty and ignorant attempt to kill any potential threat to his throne caused Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt with the child. After Herod’s death, the family returned to their hometown of Nazareth in Galilee.

During one of Jesus’ first visits to Capernaum, as an adult, He visited the Jewish synagogue. A man in the synagogue “with an unclean spirit” cried out, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene?” (Mark 1:23). It is highly significant that throughout our Lord’s three-year ministry, the unclean spirits that possessed men and women always seemed to have known His real identity. They recognized, as most Gospel accounts suggest, the threat He posed to their continued hold on the emotional and spiritual stability of those they possessed. But the point of this question from the man with an unclean spirit is the somewhat strange description, at least strange to modern ears, given Jesus. He was a “Nazarene” because His hometown was Nazareth. Bartimaeus, the blind man at Jericho heard that “Jesus, the Nazarene, was in his town and hurried to have Jesus bless him with sight” (Mark 10:47). At Jesus’ arrest on the night before His death, Peter was accosted by a maid of the high priest who accused Peter of being a disciple of “the Nazarene, even Jesus” (Mark 14:67). Even the angel at the empty tomb told the women who came to anoint His body on the resurrection morning that “Jesus, the Nazarene” had risen from the dead (Mark 16:6). What we see in this description is the revelation of a human being, a historical figure, a real person who lived among men with Nazareth as His hometown.

The people also saw and knew Him as “the Son of man.” Jesus often used this term when referring to Himself. But such a description does not surprise the student of the Old Testament. Daniel, a prophet of God, recorded the following scene. “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14). No other description of Jesus better describes His humanity. He said, “The Son of man is come eating and drinking;...” (Luke 7:34). In this phrase we come closer to an understanding of the profound statement John makes in his Gospel. “And the Word became flesh, and
dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus also strongly insisted that the “Son of man” was God’s chosen ruler of all things. After a heated discussion with the Pharisees over plucking ears of corn to eat on the Sabbath, Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath” (Mark 2:27, 28). The Sabbath was an ordinance of the old covenant of Moses and even more importantly, Jesus possessed the very authority of heaven as Lord of the Sabbath. His humanity was deliberately chosen in order that He might participate in our every burden, but His sovereign authority over us never wavered.

The “Son of man” was to be betrayed soon. Jesus predicted at the last supper (Mark 14:21, 41). The “Son of man” went to Calvary for my sins, and yours. But once the power of God had raised Jesus from death and the grave, the term “Son of man” was forgotten. Now, in the words of Thomas who first doubted that He was alive again, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5).

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus faced the now famous struggle with Satan after forty days of fasting. The Devil’s sole point of attack is seen in the condition that preceded two of the three temptations: “If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread,” and “If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down” (Matthew 4:4, 6). This very relationship between God and Christ appeared to be the most vulnerable to Satan, but Jesus demonstrated by His reactions that He was “the Son of God.”

The apostles attempted to cross the Sea of Galilee one evening and got caught in a storm. In the midst of the tossing waves, they saw Jesus walking on the water and coming to them. Peter attempted to walk on the water like Jesus but failed when he lost his confidence. After rescuing Peter and entering the boat, His disciples “worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matthew 14:33).

The high priest Caiaphas inquired whether He was “the Son of God” on the night of Jesus’ betrayal. Mark tells us in His Gospel that Jesus answered the question, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” with these words, “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:61, 62). But the greatest confession of His divinity came at the cross when He died. The Roman centurion who supervised His crucifixion, a veteran of many executions, when he saw Jesus die, said, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

The Old Testament prophets offered God’s promise of an anointed leader centuries before the coming of Jesus. The Messianic hope was indelibly stamped on page after page and event after event of the Old Testament. To the Greeks, whose language had become the common vehicle in Jesus’ time, the Messiah was translated by the term “Christ.” When King Herod, who prided himself on knowing the Jews’ religion, was approached by the wise men inquiring of a new “King of the Jews,” Herod immediately summoned “all the chief priests and scribes of the people” and “inquired of them where the Christ should be born” (Matthew 2:1-4). Both Matthew and Mark begin their Gospels with reference to “Jesus Christ” (Matthew 1:1; Mark 1:1). The shepherds near Bethlehem heard the angel of God announce “there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

But nowhere in the New Testament, and at no time during Christ’s earthly life, is the significance of “the anointed one” more powerfully displayed than toward the close of the second year of Christ’s public ministry. Matthew tells us that it all occurred near Caesarea Philippi, and started with Jesus’ question to the apostles, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” (Matthew 16:14). After hearing of the varying reports from among the people, Jesus then asked, “But who say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Let Matthew tell the rest. “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16-18).

I hope that our study of what those who lived with Jesus thought about Him has not insulated you from carefully considering what He means to you! The sole purpose of our study today, and especially our study of Jesus’ identity, is best summarized by John when he writes, “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:30, 31). That’s it — “life in his name.”

The Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, provide us valid, historical insight into the nature and identity of the man from Nazareth, Jesus, the Christ. With Thomas will you conclude of Him, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28)? Jesus said to Thomas, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Such belief, Jesus teaches in John 3:36, prompts one to obey Him. Humble yourself before “the Son of God.”
Confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ over your life (Romans 10:9, 10). Spiritually unite your life with His in New Testament baptism (Galatians 3:26, 27). Mark says “they came to him from every quarter.” What about you?

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He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville’s Young Man of the Year in 1963.