

DISCOVERING THE REAL JESUS (PART 6 OF 6): CONCLUSION

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From the aforementioned discussion, another question arises. How can we trust Mark in everything that he presents about Jesus as historically accurate? It is common knowledge that the present day gospels were not written by Jesus nor at his dictation. The earliest gospel Mark was written around 65-70 AD. So there is a time gap between Jesus' ascension and the first gospel, a gap of about 35-40 years.

As stated earlier, Mark was not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus, nor do we have clear records showing that the early church memorized the sayings of Jesus. Therefore this gap has to be viewed as considerable. During this time, the traditions of Jesus were being shaped and developed, with many different versions of the gospels being circulated in the different communities.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that the gospel writers were not merely recorders of tradition. Like the other gospel writers, Mark also edited his material. He also worked upon and reshaped the traditions that he used. Like the rest of the writers, he also was not attempting to produce a historically accurate biography of Jesus. Their concern was to present material which best served their church and reflected their understanding of Jesus rather than Jesus' own self-understanding. In reconstructing the teaching and actions of Jesus, it is possible to take account of the modifications introduced by the later gospel writers. But the period between Jesus and the emergence of the written gospels is far more problematic.

Therefore, in attempting to discover the real historical Jesus, we will have to peel back the layers behind all of the stories that were later developed about Jesus. We have to find out who Jesus was, before the gospels were written about him. When we study the gospels, we see stories of Jesus evolving over time such that the personality of Jesus grows bigger and better. Jesus is shown to be more knowledgeable and more powerful over time, until finally after many councils and disputes, he is officially proclaimed as God in the council of Nicea in the year 325 C.E. Over the course of time, Jesus was transformed from a Jewish carpenter and Messenger of God to the second person in the holy trinity. From what he was to something he would never agree with.

Yet all is not at lost. Even today, if someone wanted to know the real historical Jesus, then they can do so. God in His infinite Mercy, has once more sent a Messenger with a pristine message, a message that was not contaminated nor tampered with.

In this final message, God tells us that Jesus was a man and a mighty messenger sent by Him, that Jesus performed miracles by God's leave, that he was born of a virgin birth and that he would return towards the end of time.

In the Qur'an, God instructs the Christians:

“O People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: "Three!" Cease! it is better for you. For Allah is One God, Glory be Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is All-Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs.” (Quran 4:171)

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