

STUDY 3

Jesus the Messiah

1. Is there any other person in recorded history who did the things that Jesus did?

The short answer is no. There are no other accounts of anyone working mighty signs and wonders that compare to those of Jesus. No other person had authority over nature and sickness and demons like Jesus did. No other person pronounced forgiveness of sins as Jesus did. There is no other person who rose from the dead in the way Jesus did. (The raising of Lazarus is not the same. Lazarus was restored to his old body and would have died of old age in the ordinary way.) Jesus had a resurrection body, different in many respects from His first body as the resurrection accounts show. Interestingly, these are described in other gospels but not in Mark's Gospel. Another unique thing about Jesus is the way the prophets pointed to Him. Many features of His life were spoken about by the Old Testament prophets, some very specifically - His birth in Bethlehem for example.

There are, of course, many other founders of religious movements. Some of them have a great many followers. None of them made the same claims as Jesus, nor did they demonstrate and confirm their teachings with works of power. Jesus is totally unique.

2. When people talk about the whole gospel or the full gospel, what does this mean?

They mean that the gospel applies to the whole person; body, soul and spirit. Jesus forgives and cleanses from sin restoring us to a right relationship with God. He heals wounded souls. He provides for our daily needs. He is interested in all aspects of our lives. We can depend on Jesus to give us all the help we need in order to fulfil the will of God for our lives.

3. If we don't see everything that Jesus did repeated in our generation, will we ever?

Sometimes the words *full gospel* or *whole gospel* can be taken to an extreme when people claim that Jesus will *always* take away *all* troubles in *this* life. Such people are promising more than Jesus did. Jesus performed signs and wonders to demonstrate His authority. He was and is special. He was and is God's anointed King. They were also a foretaste and anticipations of the Kingdom of God, which was inaugurated by Jesus. This continues to come over the generations and will fully come when He returns. There have been and still are seasons when the Holy Spirit is poured out in an especially dramatic way with dramatic and visible consequences, especially when the gospel is breaking new ground. It seems to be the case that God likes to work most powerfully amongst the poor and needy.

God wants us to expect Him to do great things among us. He wants us to have faith. But He is totally sovereign in the way He does things. Sometimes He grants astonishing miracles 'out of the blue' when we are not especially expecting them. At other times He does not do what we hope for and expect. Sometimes mighty things happen to outsiders of the Kingdom and this helps them to turn to Christ in faith. Sometimes when believers receive prayer for a need or situation, God brings about a *gradual* change in their situation rather than a spectacular and instantaneous one. This stretches our faith and causes it to grow.

Jesus said:

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

John 14:12

These words have puzzled believers over the years. Was He referring to His works of power or something else? It seems that He had in mind the proclamation of the gospel being met with a positive response of people turning to Christ in faith. Despite the marvellous works of power that Jesus did, He met with a great deal of rejection.

‘He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.’

John 1:11

But looking forward, there will certainly be no more pain, nor death when Jesus returns (see *Revelation 22*). The mighty acts of Jesus demonstrated what the full manifestation of God’s kingdom will look like. In this *in-between time* we have the sure promise that Jesus is with us (*Matthew 28:20*).

4. What lessons can we learn from the story of the leper?

There are many. God can use this gospel story to speak to people in different ways. Here are just a few:

- a. Jesus is concerned about ‘outsiders and outcasts’ and His followers should be also.
- b. Jesus responds to humility and desperation - the leper begged Jesus on his knees.
- c. Jesus wants us to be clean. Leprosy was a defilement.
- d. Jesus wanted the priests to hear about His cleansing power but not at this time the general population.
- e. The leper allowed his enthusiasm and joy to over-ride obedience to Jesus’ command. Followers of Jesus sometimes need to keep their emotions in check to fulfil the will of God.
- f. Followers of Jesus need to hear, remember and then do what He says.

5. What, for you, is the most striking point in this study and why?

Once again, this passage speaks to people in different ways. Some of these could be followed up with more discussion if time allows. People should be encouraged to think more deeply on what particularly speaks to them and it is good to pray into such things.