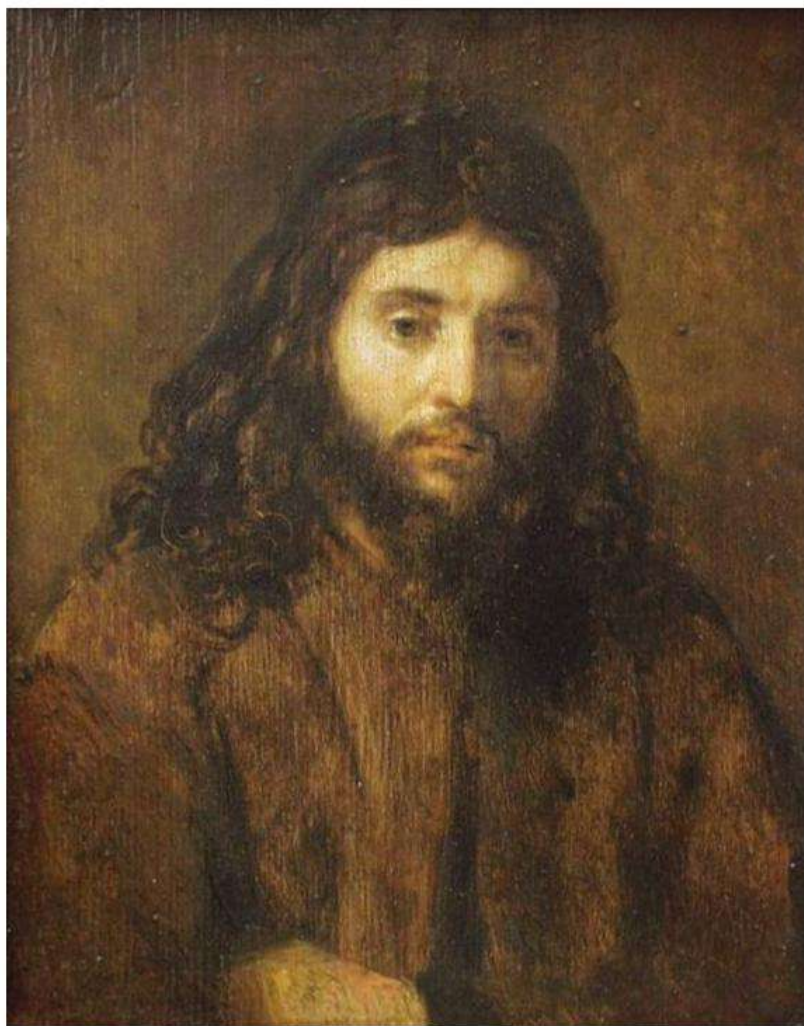


JESUS



A FENLANDS CHURCH STUDY BOOKLET

JESUS

Mark 1:1

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark writes his account of the History of Jesus by going straight in at the beginning of Christ's ministry! It is as though Jesus came in by parachute and just kept running all the way to the Cross! This helps us to see the great impact that the Lord had on everyone. John the Baptist points him out, God thunders his pleasure in this Man, and the people are shocked because they thought that God was different to this! Jesus, we read, is the exact representation of God the Father. Everything you read about him shows you what God is really like.

Now, this caused many problems for the ruling religious groups – and the Roman occupying force. In the end Jesus was killed, although innocent, in the most barbaric and cruel way imaginable. We know that this completed God's plan of redeeming sinners like us but it also demonstrated that the human race is at war with God – even the Jews! There is no point in asking God to intervene and help if we are not willing to repent and accept that Jesus is who God is! Jesus has made a clear line between those who believe and those who do not believe; those who are condemned and those who are not condemned. The process is completely fair and gives everyone the same opportunity to “surrender” to God. People may well feel that it was wrong to execute Jesus but this is not enough. God requires us to understand and believe that Jesus is who God is. This means we must see that Jesus died in our place, for our sins, and that he is the only way to peace, forgiveness and eternal life.

Acts 2:22-24 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

When Peter spoke these strong words there were thousands who heard and knew that what he was saying was true – they were witnesses. Many would have known the Old Testament promises and that Jesus had fulfilled many of them in his life and death and resurrection. In fact, the Old Testament is all about Jesus Christ (the Messiah). It reveals his character and appearing through all kinds of shadows and parallels and pictures. From the idea of a man being in God's image, through the design of the Tabernacle, the character of prophets, priests and kings, God had revealed the Coming One. Some saw Jesus and believed, others were persuaded by the miracles that he did. Some rejected the whole idea because they did not want God to be like him! However, the fact is, in very simple terms, the whole Bible is about Jesus and about God's purpose that we should believe in him and learn to be like him.

2Corinthians 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

It is important that we understand that faith in Jesus is not about human reasoning and following the wisdom of a dead teacher. There is a problem about seeing Jesus as portrayed by Rembrandt or anyone else. The apostles had to learn to see Jesus as he really is and not stay with memories of a merely human leader. Even while he was on the earth in human likeness there were times when they were helped to see that Jesus was much more than merely human. The things he did: calming a storm, raising the dead, healing the sick, his transfiguration, his resurrection, all demonstrated his true nature. Equally, the things he said set him apart from all other teachers or prophets. The men and women who walked with him

and watched his every move tell us that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God. They explain that Jesus is who God is!

Hebrews 4:14-16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Now, we must not lose sight of the fact that God has appeared in real human likeness. It was with this likeness that he ascended through the heavens and returned to his place of glory and authority. We have Jesus who understands the human condition and sympathises with us! This does not mean that he sinned – or had a sinful nature like us. He did not have any knowledge of personal sin, he did not sin, there was no sin in him. This is what the Bible explains. How could he be who God is and be a sinner? BUT, as a man he knew laughter and tears, joy and sorrow, love and rejection, comfort and hardship. He was tempted like we are. The word here does not mean seduced or lured into sin but tried, disciplined by experience, placed under hardship – that kind of thing. So, he had a full experience of the human condition and understands our needs and can see why we sinners fail so much. He does not condemn but has compassion and shows us mercy, understanding, forgiveness and grace. With all this he gives us his Spirit so that we can find strength to carry on and be like him. So, little by little the change takes place and we become more like him.

Revelation 1:17-18 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Believing in Jesus requires that we believe him, too. By this I mean that we must believe what he says. This will depend on your personal appreciation of who Jesus is. The “world of Christendom” is very confusing and seems to reflect a lot of human ideas that are not easily traced back to Jesus himself. Maybe this is because people have believed in Jesus but not taken enough notice of what he said?

John, the apostle, saw Jesus in a glorious experience while in prison in a cave on the island called Patmos. He is presented with a dilemma! He must not be afraid yet he is completely stunned by the presence of Jesus. Remember he knew Jesus as his best friend. Now, John is faced with the full nature of the Lord and needs reassuring that this glorious One is Jesus, the person he knows, who loves him and has purchased his full forgiveness through his death on the Cross. It may be difficult for us to grasp all this but let us be considerate of the truth about Jesus and learn through the Holy Spirit to revere Jesus and avoid a familiarity that loses sight of who he is and what he is able to do. Otherwise, we might resort to trusting our own ideas and abilities rather than trusting completely in him.

Jude 1:24-25 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—25 to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.