



More Than Conquerers

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A number of years ago Mark Finley was holding an evangelistic meeting in Moscow in the Kremlin Auditorium, the Kremlin Palace, It was just at that time that Communism fell. When it fell, new cities throughout the former Soviet Union opened. One of those was that city of Pushna. Pushna was a hidden city. It was closed to all western influence. It was sealed off by Chruzhchev in 1955. The city of Pushna was a city of biological scientists. These biological scientists met to develop biological weapons that the Soviet Union could use on the West. When it opened, Mark was invited to come to Pushna to speak to a group of these biological scientists. He has no idea of how many would be there in the meetings. When he got to the city he was ushered into the nicest auditorium in the city, and there were 1,000 scientists there, and their families. The auditorium was absolutely packed. The number one question that they wanted to know the answer to was this: "Who is Jesus? Is Jesus more than a good man? Is Jesus more than an ethical philosopher? Is Jesus more than a moral teacher?"

Christianity stands or falls on that question. "Who is Jesus?" In the last stage of earth's history I am convinced that the devil is going to attack Jesus more than anything else. You don't read too many criticisms of Bartholomew. You don't read a lot of criticisms of Luke. You don't read a lot of criticisms about Paul. But more and more, the devils is focusing on the purpose of Christ. In fact, for the past two thousand years, this Jesus as

the leader of Christianity is the center of controversy. It seems that Jesus is continually the focal point of debate.

Now, many are willing to accept Jesus as a divine teacher. They'll accept Him as a wise rabbi. They will accept Him as a compassionate healer, even as a spectacular miracle worker. But the divine Son of God, the One that demands our life, the One that demands our love, The One that can forgive sin, the One that can come and transform your life, the One that can restore a life; This the Christ that many are unwilling to accept!

Well, there is one thing for certain: Jesus Christ claimed He was more than a good man. He claimed that He was more than a wise or moral teacher. He claimed He was much more than a compassionate healer. If you take the gospels seriously, Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. In fact John's gospel is written to prove the divinity of Christ to a Jewish world. It begins with the assertion that Christ indeed is more than a good man. **John 1: 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**Who is this Word that was with God? Skip down to verse 14. **John 1: 14 - "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."** Who dwelt among the disciples? Obviously Jesus. So Jesus, the Word was with God, and Jesus, the Word, was God. Here is much more than a teacher uttering pious trite remarks. Here is much more than an ethical philosopher. The gospel of John points out that Jesus is divine.

Remember that discussion Jesus had with the Samaritan woman about the Messiah? **John 4: 25 - "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things."** In John 4, Jesus doesn't mince any words. **John 4: 26 - "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."**

Then in John 8, Jesus is probably clearer than He is any other place in the New Testament. Now, there was no doubt about what He meant to the Jewish mind because when Jesus uttered this statement in John 8, the Jews understood that He was referring to himself as the Messiah, and they picked up stones to stone Him. **JOHN 8: 58, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."** Now, every Jew knew exactly what Jesus meant when he said, "before Abraham was, I AM."

You remember the experience with Moses. Wandering in the wilderness he came to a bush that burned but was not consumed(Exodus 3). As Moses saw that bush, God spoke to him, "Moses, Moses." Moses said, "Here am I." And God instructed Moses to tell the children of Israel that He (that is God) is "I AM THAT I AM." Another words, God is the self-existent One. He is the One who has no beginning and no ending. He is the One who has always existed."

John 8: 58, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." In other words, "I am more than a human teacher. I am more than an

ethical philosopher. I am more than a compassionate healer. I am more than a model for teaching and a model for the medical profession. I am the self-existent eternal One.”

Now, here’s the problem: Either Jesus is what He is, or you have two other alternatives, that’s all. If Jesus is not the divine Son of God, and He claims to be, He is either a liar, or is deluded. One of these two. You have no other options. If Jesus is not the divine Son of God, and he claims to be, He is either overly lying or He is self-deluded.

How can you say that One who has such moral claims as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount - He can you say that One who touches blind eyes and they’re opened, touches the ears of the deaf and they’re unstopped, how can you say that One who breaks the bread and feeds five thousand, how can you say that a Man who raises the dead is a liar? Even Jesus’ critics says that He has the highest ethical and moral claims. Well, it is contradictory to say that Jesus has the highest ethical and moral claims, but He’s a liar and self deluded. Either Jesus is Who He says He is, or He is not, And if He’s not, He is certainly not a good man nor a moral teacher, nor a compassionate healer. Because good men don’t lie and moral teachers don’t pervert the truth, and compassionate healers don’t deceive multitudes.

The controversy regarding Jesus’ identity still rages today. You see, the devil does not care if you accept Jesus as a moral creature. The devil doesn’t care if you accept Jesus as an ethical philosopher. He doesn’t care if you look at His miracles and say He’s a great healer. The devil doesn’t care as long as you don’t accept Him as your Messiah

If you accept Him as the Messiah, that means He has reigns on your life. If you accept Him as Messiah, and if He is your Lord, then His demands are allegiance and commitment. And the devil doesn’t care what you believe about evil as long as you do not accept Jesus as Lord. Because, if you do that, then that requires commitment. That requires decision. That requires repentance. That requires forsaking something that is still in the Bible, called sin. If Jesus is simply a Jewish teacher, then there is absolutely no need in giving your life to Him. If He is only a good man, his offer of eternal life is completely and absolutely false. The devil will do anything he can to discredit Who Jesus really is.

On April 6, 2006, the national Geographic Magazine published the English translation of a long anticipated Coptic text - an ancient text that was found in Egypt. CNN devoted headline prime-time to the discovery of the Gospel of Judas. Los Angeles Times, Atlanta Journal, the Miami Herald, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Times, all gave front page coverage to the Gospel of Judas. Now, what is the Gospel of Judas? And why would the devil introduce it just now? The Gospel of Judas was timed to be introduced just before the feature film, The Da Vinci Code, which was just released this month. Ed Brown’s book, the Da Vinci Code, has sold forty million copies. It weaves fact with fiction. The Gospel of Judas says this: that Judas and Jesus really were in a plot together. They were in a conspiracy together. And the Gospel of Judas says that Jesus that Jesus was not really betrayed by Judas, but Judas is a hero because Jesus wanted Judas to betray Him.

Well, that is rather interesting, isn't it. What could Jesus accomplish if he was just a good man wanting Judas to betray Him and ended up dead? That doesn't quite make sense, does it. The best dates for the gospel of Judas, if you look at it through carbon-dating, would be around the fourth century. Are you willing to take a document written in the fourth century as a copy of a copy of a copy, when you have eyewitness accounts of Who Jesus really is, written in the first century.

Let's take an example of our neighbours south of the border. Let's say that there is a history of the United States that is written, and that history of the United States was written three or four hundred years after the Declaration of Independence, written in the twenty-first century. And let's suppose that five hundred years goes by, and a thousand years go by. Let's suppose that Jesus doesn't come and somebody is looking back at the history of America. They see a revised history of America written totally differently, but it is written three hundred and forty years after the Declaration of Independence. Would you reject the authentic creditable writings of Abraham Lincoln? Of George Washington? Of Ben Franklin? Of Thomas Jefferson? To accept something written three or four hundred years later? You would say, "Absolutely not! That's crazy!"

But yet, there are those that try to recast Christ. They would accept a supposed gospel of Judas written hundreds of years after the actual event.

Peter was certainly right in 2 Peter 1: 16. Unless you really understand Who Jesus is, and the claims He has on your life, and unless you have a personal encounter with this living Christ, Christianity is nothing more than one of multiple man-made creeds in human religion. The difference between Christianity and anything else is that Christ claims to be divine. He claims never to have a beginning and never having an ending. In **2 Peter 1: 16**, Peter is speaking about New Testament Christianity: **"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."**

The gospels were written in the first century by those that were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Sure there were other gospels written. Sure there were all eyewitnesses of second and third centuries., But Peter, James, John account of the real birth of this Christ. The New Testament is an eyewitness account of the real birth of Jesus, the real life of Jesus, the real miracles of Jesus, the Jesus Who could change lives and forgive sin, the Jesus that really died, the Jesus that transformed lives.

Jesus is a real Saviour Who really forgives sin.

Jesus is a real Saviour that really brings peace to your heart.

Jesus is a real Saviour that really brings hope to our souls.

Jesus is real Saviour that really brings courage to our lives.

Jesus is a real Saviour that really has the power to make us whole.

He's not a make-believe Saviour. He's not an earthly moral ethical teacher. But He is the divine Son of God that can change our lives today.

One evening an evangelist was preaching on Christ. At the end of the meeting a man came up to the preacher. He was a businessman dressed in his pinstriped suit, Trying to impress. He was carrying his black leather attache case, and as he came up he was quite furious. He began loudly talking, waving his finger. The preacher stepped back. This man was quite aggressive. He kept pointing his finger and the preacher just kept stepping back a little. After all, he was tired, he was exhausted. The irate man was saying something like this: "Christ is not divine! There were many so-called messiahs back then. You can look at the early writings and you will find many people believed in a messiah. Christ wasn't divine. The church composed the New Testament." He was trying to impress the people standing around the preacher.

Now, this preacher didn't mind honest questions, but he had no time to spare verbally with this man who didn't want answers but only wanted to argue. Standing next to the preacher was his friend, Bucky. Bucky was six feet, two. He weighed about two hundred and he was solid muscle. He was kind of a combination of Hulk Hogan, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Charles Atlas. This guy just rippled. He has muscles bulging from shirt.

I need to give you a little background so you can understand the story and understand what the preacher did. Bucky drove up to the evangelistic meetings many weeks before with his motorcycle gang. Eight members of the motorcycle gang would come in and sit in the back. The first day the preacher had very good interest but he didn't know if these guys were running from the police or what. A religious meeting was a good place to hide. But one night when he preached on Jesus, Bucky knelt down on the floor and cried like a baby. After the meeting he came up and hugged the preacher. He lifted him up and almost cracked his back. This preacher and this gang member developed a real bonding and a real good friendship and he'd give the preacher a high-five after the meeting and a hug. He accepted Christ. He was standing right next to his friend the preacher when this guy with the pinstriped suit was arguing and putting his finger up next to the preacher's nose. The preacher turned and said to his friend Bucky, "Will you help me?" The guy began to shake. Bucky now thought that he was his bodyguard. Bucky looked down at him and said something like this, "Sir, you can be very thankful there is a real Jesus that transforms people's lives. Because if there were not, I'd probably take you out in the back alley. But since there is, and since I have come to Christ, and he has changed my life, all I want to do now is reach out and embrace you."

How do you argue with that? How do you argue with a Christ that can put marriages together. How do you argue with a Christ that can take the guilt away and give you comfort and hope when a child is dying. How do you argue with a Christ that transforms you from that angry bitter person that you once were. How do you argue with a Christ

that gives you hope of eternal life and a sense that there is something indeed beyond the grave?

You see, even writers in the first century, non Christians, Jewish writers, Roman writers and Greek writers noticed that there was something different about this Christ. Something about this Christ that could change lives. You ancient secular historians who don't believe in Him as the Messiah acknowledged His incredible power to transform lives. You may not be aware, but not only do the gospels speak about Jesus; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But secular historians of the day speak about him.

Let me give you some examples. The second century writer, Tutonius. He wrote in 117 AD. He was the chief secretary for the emperor Hadrian. Now, Tutonius had access to the Roman Imperial records. After the death of Christ in 33 AD. In 117 AD, one of the earliest records we have of Christ, here is what Tutonius writes. "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Christ, Claudius, the Emperor expelled them from the city." Now, what were the disturbances that the Christians were causing? They would not offer incense to the Emperor's image. And they caused such a disturbance that Claudius sent them out of the city. These Christians were willing to face death. They were willing to leave their homes. They were willing to leave their possessions and their jobs behind According to the secular historian. What power this Christ must have had! People left their families behind, their homes behind. They were willing to face death. Why? Because they believed He was more than a good man, more than an ethical teacher. They gave their total lives to Him. They sensed that this Jesus did not simply demand their time and their energy, but their all.

Josephus was the greatest Jewish historian that ever lived. He lived in the first century, at the time of Christ. Now what motivation would a Jewish historian have who doesn't accept Christ but writes about the miraculous work of Christ. Here's what Josephus said, "Not only do we have eyewitness accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but we have Roman writers who write about Jesus. We have Greek writers who write about Jesus. We have Jewish writers who write about Jesus." Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the Christ); and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets has foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so name from him, are not extinct at this day." "He is the Christ. He can change your life." What a powerful testimony from a Jewish historian.

As mentioned at the beginning of this message, the Da Vinci Code, which has been read by over forty million people, is now a major motion picture. The Da Vinci Code portrays the idea that the divinity of Christ was a heresy that came into the church in the fourth century brought by Constantine. The whole idea of the Da Vinci Code is that

Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. Do you remember seeing the painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo Da Vinci? This painting pictured a feminine John and now this book is saying that it's not actually the apostle John in the painting but it is really Mary Magdalene who is Jesus' wife. The whole thesis of that novel weaves fiction with some very small semblance of the truth. The truth is very hard to find in the Da Vinci Code. The theory that is projected to the public, under the guise of supposed factual accounts, is that Jesus really is not divine. That was just introduced by Constantine in the fourth century.

Well, how do you account for eyewitness accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that say He is divine? How do you account for Roman writers and Jewish writers amazed at this living Christ?

Let me give you an amazing example. There is a roman writer called, Quin. Quin the Younger and Quin the elder. Quin the elder is known for writing letters. He wrote about ten thousand letters and they're put in a number of books. Here's what he writes during the early second century: "They the Christians were in the habit of meeting on a certain sixth day before it was light. When they sang in alternate verses hymn to Christ as a God." You see, even the secular historians had to admit that the Christians believed the Christ was God. Was Jesus for real? That makes all the difference in a church located in Bay Roberts or Conception Bay South or any church that claims the Bible as its only authority. Let the witnesses of the New Testament source speak. Let the voice from the past echo in our ears. Let the narratives a thousand years old come true. Come with me down the crowded streets of Jerusalem and meet the man, Blind Bartemaus by name and ask him, "Is Jesus for real?" And Bartemaus would answer, "This I know, I once was blind, but now I see, I see! My wife, my family, my friends. All of life is new to me." Is Jesus real? Come with me to meet the paralytic who has been paralyzed for thirty-right years, shivering by the pool of Bethesda. Watch as he leaps and runs and sing praises to Jesus' name. Is Jesus for real? Ask the paralytic. Is Jesus real? Come with me to meet the woman who had the issue of blood, hemorrhaging for twelve years. She was penniless and poor and poverty stricken. In a desperate touch she reached out and touched the hem of Jesus garment and new life flowed through her body. Is Jesus real? Ask her if He's real. Is Jesus real? Come with me to meet an

affluent Jewish businessman, Jarius and note how he tells how his own daughter has died. And Jesus spoke and raised her to life again. Ask Jarius and he will say to you, "He must be divine. He raise my daughter from the dead." Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are New Testament accounts eyewitnesses stories that Jesus is the only place to be. Is Jesus divine? Is He the divine Son of God that can change your life and mine. Is His offer of forgiveness real? Is His offer of power real? Go to Mary and Martha and watch them as they embrace their brother, Lazarus. Is He divine? He raised Lazarus from the dead. This divine Jesus Christ is transforming men and women today.

Listen to this story as related by Mark Finlay, "Four thousand people were coming and my host said, "Mark, you've got to meet somebody. You've got meet Johnny." Hey Johnny, what's up?" He began to talk. He said, "Mark, my life has been changed by this Christ." "Tell me the story."

He said, "I was a drug-runner across the Mexican border. Running drugs. I was up at Las Vegas on a drug deal. The drug deal went bad. A guy pulled out a gun and shot me in the stomach. I lay on the concrete ground bleeding to death. He took off with the money. I crawled to my car, got in my car in some way, drove to my mother's place in Las Vegas. I came staggering into the house and fell on the couch, the blood pouring out. My mother said, "I'm going to take you to the hospital." I said, "Mom, if you take me to the hospital I'll go to jail. I'm not going to any hospital."

Johnny fainted on the couch and his mother picked him up and finally got 911 and they rushed him to the hospital. He lived. When he got out of the hospital they took him to jail. After serving time in jail, he said, "I'm going back to Mexico or else they'll put me in jail again. So, it's back to Mexico."

Hardened drug runner. A criminal. Gang warrior. But he met an Adventist neighbor who began to talk to him about Jesus, how Jesus could give him a new life, how Jesus could give him peace, how Jesus could transform his life. One day Johnny said, "Lord Jesus, I believe that you can do for me what you've done for others." And he said, "Pastor I'm not perfect. But I'm not the same as I was three years ago. I'm not the same as I was five years ago. I'm not the same as I was ten years ago. You can never meet Jesus and be the same."

Friends, you can come to the Adventist church Sabbath, and you can sing the hymns and you can mouth the words, and it can make little difference in your life. You can memorize all the doctrines and be a defender of the faith and it can make little difference in your life. You can argue about the Sabbath. You can argue whether it's right or wrong to do this, that or the other thing. It can make little difference in your life. You can be brought up in an Adventist home, you can go to Adventist schools, you can have it all right in your head but the difference between the head and the heart may be the difference between eternal life and eternal loss.

Have you ever come to this Christ personally? Have you ever sensed His claims on your life? Have you ever said, "Lord. The essence of it all is knowing you. Lord I want to know you. I want to know you. I want my life transformed for You by You. I want the forgiveness and the power and peace and the joy and the freedom from guilt and a sense of security that only You can offer.

In the quietness of your own heart why don't you say, "Lord, the evidence is overwhelming. The eyewitness accounts are sure. I commit my life to you today now and forever. Amen."