

Jesus The King: Understanding The Life & Death Of The Son Of God

Discussion Guide

“My purpose here is to try to show, through [Jesus’] words and actions, how beautifully his life makes sense of ours.” – Tim Keller

Chapter 4: The Rest

*Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins, and the religious leaders called that blasphemy. But Jesus goes on to make a claim so outrageous that the leaders don't have a word for it. Jesus declares not that he has come to reform religion but that he's here to **end** religion and replace it with himself.*

Read Mark 2:23-28 and 3:1-6

Why do you think Jesus become angry with the religious leaders?

The Sabbath is about restoring the diminished. It's about replenishing the drained. It's about repairing the broken. To heal the man's shriveled hand is to do exactly what the Sabbath is all about...[The religious leaders'] hearts are as shriveled as the man's hand. They're insecure and anxious about the regulations. Their tribal, judgmental, and self obsessed instead of caring about the man. Why? Religion.

How would you describe the difference between religion and the gospel?

Most people in the world believe that if there is a God, you relate to God by being good. Most religions are based on that principle, though there are a million different variations on it... But they all have the same logic: If I perform, if I obey, I'm accepted. The gospel of Jesus is not only different from that but diametrically opposed to it; I'm fully accepted in Jesus Christ, and therefore I obey.

Why should I be good (under the system of religion)? Why should I be good under the Gospel?

In religion the purpose of obeying the law is to assure you that you're alright with God. As a result, when you come to the law, what you're most concerned about is detail. You want to know exactly what you've got to do, because you have to push all the right buttons... But in the life of Christians the law of God – though still binding on them – functions in a completely different way. It shows you the life of love you want to live before the God who has done so much for you. God's law takes you out of yourself; It shows you how to serve God and others instead of being absorbed with yourself. You study and obey the law of God in order to discover the kind of life you should live in order to please and resemble the one who created and redeemed you.

Jesus called himself the Lord of the Sabbath, not the Lord over the Sabbath. Read Keller's thoughts on this, this share your thoughts.

The word Sabbath means a deep rest, a deep peace. It's a near synonym for Shalom – a Of wholeness and flourishing in every dimension of life. When Jesus says, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath," Jesus means that he is the Sabbath. He is the source of the deep rest we need. He has come to completely change the way we rest. The one-day-a-week rest We take is just a taste of the deep divine rest we need, and Jesus is its source.

So when Jesus claims to be the one who can give us rest, what do you think that means?

Most of us work and work trying to prove ourselves, to convince God, others, and ourselves that we're good people. The work is never over unless we rest in the gospel. At the end of his great act of creation the Lord said, "It is finished," and he could rest. On the cross at the end of his great act of redemption Jesus said, "It is finished" – and we can rest...[Jesus] Has lived the life you should have lived, he has died the death you should have died. If you rely on Jesus's finished work, you know that God is satisfied with you. You can be satisfied with life.

When Jesus used the words, 'I am', what was he claiming? Read Keller's thoughts below, then look up the Scriptures.

*Jesus self-awareness is startling. No other human teacher has made anything like the claims he makes. There are plenty who have said, "I'm the divine consciousness." but they think of the divinity as being in all of us, in the trees and the rocks and the human spirit. Jesus, however, understands that there is a God who is uncreated, without beginning, infinitely transcendent, who made this world, who keeps everything in the universe going, so that all the molecules, all the stars, all the solar systems are being held up by the power of this God. And Jesus says, **That's who I am.***

How else did Jesus describe himself using the words 'I am'?

John 6:35 _____

John 8:12 _____

John 10:7,9 _____

John 10:11, 14 _____

John 11:25 _____

John 14:6 _____

John 15:1 _____

Meditate on these 7 sayings for a moment, then write out a short paragraph describing in your own words how Jesus can give you rest.

In the final section of this chapter, *The End Of Religion*, Keller points out that both the religious conservatives and the irreligious societal progressives agreed that they both needed to get rid of Jesus. Discuss this for a moment, then read Keller's take on it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is an offense to both religion and irreligion...The 'traditional values' approach to life [insists] You must lead a very, very good life. The progressive approach... self- discovery – you have to decide what is right or wrong for you.... Both are hostile to the message of Jesus. And not only that, both lead to self- righteousness... in western cosmopolitan culture there's an enormous amount of self-righteousness about self-righteousness. We progressive urbanites are so much better than people who think they're better than other people. We disdain those religious, moralistic types who look down on others. Do you see the irony, how the way of self- discovery leads to as much superiority and self-righteousness as religion does?

The gospel does not say, 'the good are in and the bad are out,' nor 'the open-minded are in and the judgmental are out.' The gospel says the humble are in and the proud are out. The gospel says that people who know they're not better, not more open- minded, not more moral than anyone else, are in, and the people who think they're on the right side of the divide are most in danger.

Chapter 5: The Power

Read Mark 4:35-41

When Jesus woke up, two amazing things happened. What were they, according to Keller?

The first was his words themselves, a command of utter simplicity. He didn't brace himself, roll up his sleeves, and raise a wand. There are no incantations. He said: Quiet! Be still! That's it... The more astonishing thing is that the storm obeyed like a compliant child.... If you've ever gone on an ocean cruise or lived on the shore, you know that even when the winds stop and the storm ends, the waves keep pounding for hours afterward... By his actions here Jesus is demonstrating, 'I am not just someone who has power; I am power itself.'

Why are the disciples afraid after Jesus calms the storm?

Jesus's question to them [‘Why are you so afraid?’] has behind it this thought: Your Premise is wrong. You should have known better period I do allow people I love to go through storms. You had no reason to panic.

Why were they more terrified in the calm than they were in the storm? Because Jesus was as unmanageable as the storm itself. The storm had immense power – they couldn't control it. Jesus had infinitely more power, so they had even less control over him. But there's a huge difference. A storm doesn't love you.

What lessons are in this story that can help me when I go through storms? Write out some of your thoughts.

In asking the disciples where their faith is, we learn something very important about faith? Read Keller's thoughts, then discuss.

Jesus is prompting them to see that the critical factor in their faith is not its strength, but its object... it's not the quality of your faith that saves you; It's the object of your faith. It doesn't matter how you feel about the branch [a branch you reach out to when you are falling off a cliff]. All that matters is the branch. And Jesus is the branch.

People who believe more must not be hard on those who believe less. Why? Because faith ultimately is not a virtue; It's a gift.

If you want to believe but can't, stop looking inside; Go to Jesus and say, “Help me believe.” Go to him and say, “So you're the one who gives faith! I've been trying to work it out by reasoning and thinking and meditating and going to church in hopes that a sermon will move me – I've been trying to get faith by myself period now I see that you're the source of faith. Please give it to me.” if you do that, you'll find that Jesus has been seeking you – he's the author of faith, the provider of faith, and the object of faith.

What similarities are in this story with the story of Jonah?

Chapter 6: The Waiting

“Grant that we may follow the example of Jesus’ patience.” – Thomas Cranmer

Read Mark 5:21-34.

Where are places in the gospels where we see Jesus exercising patience? How about in this story?

God's sense of timing will confound ours, no matter what culture we're from. His grace rarely operates according to our schedule...It's not “I will not be hurried even though I love you”; It's “I will not be hurried because I love you. I know what I'm doing. And if you try to impose your understanding of schedule and timing on me, you will struggle to feel loved by me.”

Talk about this.

But precisely because of the delay both Cyrus and the woman get far more than they ask for. Be aware that when you go to Jesus for help, you will both give to and get from him far more than you bargained for. Be patient, because the deal often doesn't work out the way you expect it.

How so? And have you ever experienced this?

So often, if God seems to be unconsciously delaying his grace and committing malpractice in our life, it's because there is some crucial information that we don't yet have, some essential variable that's unavailable to us... When I look at the delays of God in my own life, I realized that a great deal of my consternation has been rooted in arrogance. I complained to Jesus, “Okay, you're the eternal son of God, you've lived for all eternity, you created the universe. But why would you know any better than I do how my life should be going?”

Jesus is the ultimate parent who has you by the hand and will bring you through the darkest night... Why would we want to hurry somebody this powerful in this loving, who treats us this tenderly? Why would we be impatient with somebody like this?

Meditate on these two paragraphs silently for a couple minutes, then write out a short prayer to the Lord in response.