

Encountering Jesus



Meeting Jesus afresh
over a cuppa
(through the Gospel of John)

Mark Dorey



Meet Jesus afresh

Jesus – everyone has different views

*But who was He
and what was He all about?*

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What if you could meet Jesus afresh?

Through a series of short 'coffee break' encounters, journey with John, a close and personal friend of Jesus, who simply wants to introduce you to who Jesus really is!

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Encountering Jesus

Encountering Jesus was *the* pivotal moment of my life. Everything changed for me way back in 1995 when I truly met with Jesus for the very first time.

Yet in my experience, whenever and wherever the name of Jesus is mentioned, he remains a controversial subject. There are many different views of who he was and what he was about, or if he even existed in the first place! Generally, even if he did exist, Jesus and the Bible are thought of as being somewhat outdated and irrelevant in these modern times. The only time we hear his name mentioned with any passion is when it is being used as a swear word.

THE BIG QUESTION IS:

WHO WAS JESUS AND WHAT WAS HE ALL ABOUT?

What I want to do is to go on a journey with you, in the company of one of Jesus' closest friends and disciples, John, to reveal Jesus afresh to you, not as someone you've already heard of, but as a new person, someone you don't know.

So, with this in mind, I want to ask you that whatever you know (or don't know) about Jesus, his miracles and his teachings, just to put these thoughts aside and let me introduce Jesus to you anew, as a complete stranger, so there are no pre-conceptions or expectations, just someone who I would like you to meet.

In order to do this, I'm going to use John's Gospel, with the disciple John as our personal guide, looking at bite-sized pieces of John's story. So, you will need a Bible to hand or any one of the many translations available online. For example, *biblegateway.com* offers many translations and even allows you to listen to, rather than read the Bible. Whichever Bible translation or version you use doesn't really matter, although in the places where I have quoted from the Bible, I have used the New Living Translation.

At the end of each short section there are three short questions to help you reflect:

1. What do you know about Jesus that you never knew before?
2. Has this changed your opinion of him? If so, how?
3. What other questions, if any, has this raised?

There is also some space for you to write your own thoughts on what you have read and maybe learnt about Jesus, and how this might affect your life going forward.

Look out for the personal monologues from people who encountered Jesus first hand. Hopefully these will give you a new perspective on who Jesus is, and how he touched and transformed their lives as he interacted with them.

So, grab yourself a cuppa and enjoy the ride!

Looking forward to sharing the journey with you!

Mark Dorey

P.S. By the way, throughout this book, Jesus is sometimes referred to in many ways, depending on the context, for example, *God's Son*, *Son of Man*, *The Christ* or *Messiah*, or even *The Word*.

Also, whilst recognising God as genderless, throughout this book, I will refer to God as 'he', as this is how God is traditionally represented in most Bible translations.

Jesus: More than just a Man

[Read John chapter 1, verses 1 to 18](#)

John opens his Gospel – Gospel simply means Good News – right at the beginning. Not at the beginning of Jesus' life on earth, but from the beginning of time itself. John's friendship and eye witness account of Jesus makes some staggering claims about this simple carpenter from Nazareth, saying that not only did Jesus exist before time itself, but that he, as God's Son, also created everything in the whole universe!

The Bible was written to tell us about who God really is. John calls Jesus 'The Word' because many people, in John's time and in our time, find the Bible hard to understand, and so they didn't fully grasp who God really was. This misunderstanding of who God is had (and has even until today) gone on for thousands of years. So, God the Father came up with an amazing plan to send Jesus his Son as the 'Living Word', a living, breathing, people-relating, people-loving person, in order to show everyone God as a real person, someone they could touch, talk to and interact with.

John also calls Jesus the Light because he shines light (or Truth) on who God is, so that we can know him and see what he's really like. So, John is in effect saying right at the beginning of his story about Jesus, that if you truly want to know what God is like, look at Jesus and see what he does, see how he interacts and touches people, transforming their lives in everyday situations. If you want to know what God thinks and why he does what he does, listen to Jesus and hear what he has to say.

As God's Son, Jesus has been around since before the beginning of time, with God the Father. Not only that, but Jesus is here with us right now, by the power of his Holy Spirit, listening to everything we say and knowing our innermost thoughts – this is the Holy Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

As God's Son, John tells us that Jesus created everything that ever was, the Moon, the Stars, all the plants and animals – the whole universe! John tells us that in all creation, it is us and us alone who can have a relationship with God, and more than that, we can become children of God.

The simple message that John tells us is this, that Jesus is God. How does that sound? Many have searched for God and wondered if he even exists, but John tells us that Jesus is God, not just God's Son, but God himself. Isn't that an amazing claim?

The Bible was written to tell us about who God really is.

Jesus came to earth not only to reveal who God was in person, but also to experience and know what it was like to be human, to be like us and experience all the same things we experience, because unless you experience something for yourself, you don't really know how others are feeling; you can't really understand why they do things and where they are at.

The concept of God is hard for people to grasp; that's why Jesus came. To show us exactly who God is, as a real person. Jesus gave up his home in heaven for thirty three years, in order to experience life as a human being on earth. John tells us that Jesus came so that ordinary people like you and me, might really know what God is like, to be able to see him and touch him, just as John did himself, so that we might really know him and become children of God so that our lives may be transformed forever.

In verses 6 to 9 and 15 to 19, John mentions another John, John the Baptist, who was sent as God's messenger to announce the arrival of Jesus – the Light – on earth. In the very last book of the Old Testament, God speaks through his prophet, Malachi and promises to send a special messenger ahead of his Son, who would then go on to restore the relationship between God and us. John the Baptist even expresses something of Jesus' eternal nature when he says, *"This is the one [Jesus] I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"*

As John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and was born six months before Jesus, this would be an exceptionally odd thing for him to say!

So, what further evidence did John, the Gospel writer, have to come to these conclusions? Hopefully, you will find out as we go through his Gospel, which is his own personal account of knowing Jesus for himself.

Points for reflection

What do you know about Jesus that you never knew before?

Has this changed your opinion of him? If so, how?

What other questions, if any, has this raised?



John the Baptist - Messenger

[Read John chapter 1, verses 19 to 28](#)

Like many others growing up in the 1970s, I loved watching lots of American TV, in particular cops and detective shows like *Starsky & Hutch*, *Columbo*, *Petrocelli* and many others too, and although I have never been in a court of law, I have seen many dramas of where a witness is cross-examined by various attorneys, trying to attain the truth of the matter.

When John the Baptist arrives on the scene, the priests and the Temple assistants (some of the religious authorities of the day), were sent to question John the Baptist, because the Jews had long been expecting a God-sent Messiah (the Christ aka a Saviour), to liberate them from all their oppressors, and because John was preaching about God and baptising people into repentance, they thought that John could well be the long awaited Messiah.

After John stated clearly that he was not the Messiah, they finally ask, "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah (who prophesied John's coming 700 years earlier): "[I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the Lord's coming!'](#)"

[Then the Pharisees who had been sent asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptise?"](#)

[John told them, "I baptise with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognise. Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."](#)

John the Baptist not only knew who he was and his purpose in life, but John also knew the reality of who Jesus was and his proper place in respect to Jesus being God's Son. Very often we hear in modern society the term: "Don't shoot, I'm only the messenger!", inferring that whatever the message is that they are delivering, they are merely reporting the message from a greater authority. In John's time, a King would often be

preceded by a herald or a messenger to inform everyone that the King was about to visit, in order that everyone would make the necessary preparations for the royal visit. The problem with Jesus is that he didn't come with a big fanfare or a golden crown or a massive army – he came as a carpenter from the backwater town of Nazareth, so John was right when he told the authorities: *“but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognise.”*

Why did Jesus come in this way? Well, I believe that Jesus was out to seek people's hearts, those who would gladly follow him out of love, and not out of obedience or fear because of who he is. And as we continue to journey through John Gospel, I believe that we will witness first-hand how God really wants to relate to people just like you and me.

Points for reflection

What do you know about Jesus that you never knew before?

Has this changed your opinion of him? If so, how?

What other questions, if any, has this raised?

Jesus' Mission

[Read John chapter 1, verses 29 to 34](#)

Have you ever experienced a broken relationship? Which side of the brokenness were you on? Were you on the side that wanted freedom? Or were you on the side that ended up with a broken heart? If your heart was broken, what would you do to win them back?

This is an important question, because restoring the broken relationship between us and God is what Jesus is all about. Right at the beginning of the Bible we are told how Adam and Eve had everything in a perfect world, and yet decided to go their own way – they sinned – because they thought they were missing out on something – they broke their relationship with God. Sin breaks relationships and separated us from God who is the giver of all life. Without our life-giving bond with God, our sin is a death penalty, both physically and spiritually. Since that time, God has been broken hearted and has sought to restore our broken relationship so that we may once more have real life.

All through the Old Testament of the Bible, God makes a Promise. One day, at just the right time, a Saviour – the Messiah – would destroy the power of sin, putting everything right to restore our broken relationship with God. First, he sent John the Baptist to call everyone to repentance, which simply means turning back to God because God's son Jesus was about to arrive on the scene.

When John the Baptist sees Jesus, he calls him [“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”](#) Every year the Israelites made a sin offering where they sacrificed lambs to pay for their sin so they can be restored to God. Jesus came as the Lamb of God, a perfect sacrifice that will restore us to God forever, once and for all. God can't skip around the death penalty for sin, it must be paid – God cannot bend the rules just because he is God, so he has to find the perfect sin offering – someone who has never sinned, to pay the death penalty once and for all. That's why Jesus came. He is the perfect sin offering for everyone – The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The story is told of two friends who went to University. After graduating, one went on to be a High Court judge, the other fell on hard times and into a life of crime. One day, the two meet again, this time at opposite ends of the court, one is the Judge, the other is the criminal. When it comes to sentencing his friend, the Judge has no choice but to carry out the requirements of the law. He must fine his friend £20,000. Failure to pay the fine will result in a 10 year prison sentence. The Judge knows his friend has no chance of paying the fine. As the two friends look at each other, the Judge with a heavy heart fines his friend £20,000 as the law dictates. Then, he takes off his Judge's gown and walks across the court and writes his dear friend a cheque for £20,000 so that he may walk free. Not only have the demands of the law been satisfied, but the Judge has been able to show his friend just how much he loves him. In all of this, the friend has the right to accept or refuse the cheque.

God loved us so much that he sent his son Jesus. To live the sinless life we couldn't live and to pay the price of sin with his death on the Cross. God the Father passed the judgement of death for our sin, as the law demanded, then he himself paid the price with the life of his own son, Jesus.

Despite Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, we each have the right to accept or refuse his offer of eternal life.

God can't skip around the death penalty for sin, it must be paid – God cannot bend the rules just because he is God, so he has to find the perfect sin offering – someone who has never sinned, to pay the death penalty once and for all.

Points for reflection

What do you know about Jesus that you never knew before?

Has this changed your opinion of him? If so, how?

What other questions, if any, has this raised?



Jesus: An Abundant Giver

Read John chapter 2, verses 1 to 12

Weddings have always been a time of great celebration with lots to eat and drink! In Jesus' time, weddings were big affairs, with celebrations going on all week, where everyone in the village was invited, and everyone would be expected to bring along something to the celebration.

At this particular wedding everyone's having a good time – then disaster strikes – they run out of wine! Mary, Jesus' mother, knows that her son can somehow fix this problem, even though Jesus had not performed any miracles up to this point. Maybe he and his disciples can go to the shops and get some more bottles...

Jesus tells the servants to fill six large stone water jars normally used for washing, with water and take it to the wedding reception. When the water is poured out, it has miraculously turned into vintage wine! The Master of Ceremonies is well impressed with the bridegroom, saying most people serve the good wine first, bringing out the cheap and nasty stuff only after everyone is too drunk to notice.

Contrary to what many may believe, Jesus is not against people celebrating and having a good time.

This was Jesus' first miracle, and he goes well beyond all expectations:

1. Each of the stone jars that was filled with water held thirty gallons – that's 200 bottles of wine per jar, so six jars = 1,200 bottles of wine! There is no way that the guests could have finished all that extra wine, so they most probably took more than a few bottles home with them, which they in turn would have shared with their guests.
2. This miracle wine is not cheap plonk, it is the finest wine imaginable. Jesus wants the wedding guests to have the very, very best that he can give.

Jesus isn't begrudging or stingy. He doesn't just 'bring a bottle' to the celebration – he goes beyond all expectation – 1,200 bottles of the best wine ever! Contrary to what many may believe, Jesus is not against people celebrating and having a good time. Far from it, Jesus loves to celebrate. Just like this miracle of turning 180 gallons of water into the best wine ever, Jesus wants to transform our lives, so that we may live our best lives ever, living abundantly in all he has to give.

Jesus came so that we might have life in all its fullness.

Points for reflection

What do you know about Jesus that you never knew before?

Has this changed your opinion of him? If so, how?

What other questions, if any, has this raised?

The Master of the Banquet

I'd never tasted anything like it – gallons and gallons of heavenly wine! The cheap stuff had all gone, long gone, which was hardly surprising; this was a wedding after all...

In fairness there hadn't been much to start with, even if it was cheap, but cheap or not, it soon went. I didn't know what to do; all the wine was gone and the guests were hardly tipsy, let alone drunk. I did my best to stall proceedings, to stave off the inevitable and minimise embarrassment, after all, that was my job – I was the Master of the Banquet.

Then the servants started running about filling the ceremonial washing jars with fresh water. *What on earth were they doing?* The ceremonial washing was already done before everyone sat down to eat; now here they were refilling the jars.

Then I saw him. He wasn't a servant; I'm not sure who he was really, maybe he was a guest. Whoever he was, he was directing the servants – my servants, who were now aimlessly wasting time filling jars!

Things were coming to a head.

I looked over at the Bride; I could see she was getting upset. She knew what was going on, as did the Groom who was trying to calm her down. This was their Big Day and they were out of wine. Too many guests, some invited, many were not, which was so often the way in weddings. I would have to do something, but I was just the Master of the Banquet, not a miracle worker.

Suddenly, a commotion broke out behind me. The servants were shouting and laughing. I made a mental note to discipline them after the wedding, when the crisis was over. Then one brought me a goblet. It was filled with wine! He said they had gallons and gallons of the stuff. He offered me the goblet, urging me to drink.

I took a sip – the wine was like nothing I'd ever tasted before – the best of the very best. I stared at the servant who just kept saying over and over. "This is amazing! This is amazing!"

I ordered them to serve and caught the Groom's eye, complimenting him on saving the best wine till last, but he was looking as shocked as I was. My attention was caught by another one of the servants.

"It was him! It was him! He ordered us to fill the jars with water and

when we drew from them again, the water had turned into wine. He's turned the water into wine – over 100 gallons of it! It's a miracle, it's a blessed miracle!"

I looked over to where the servant was pointing. It was that man again, the same one who'd been directing the servants. He was sitting amongst the guests, acting as if nothing had happened. No one suspected a thing; not a thing. He glanced over and I caught his eye. I smiled at him. He smiled back. This mysterious stranger was the real Master of the Banquet.



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