

Sermon on Mark 1:14-20 - The Gospel of the Kingdom and the calling of four fishermen

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The timing of Jesus message

Once Jesus had experienced the testings and trials in the wilderness, He did not begin His ministry until John had been into custody by King Herod according to Mark and Matthew.

“The time is fulfilled”

The time is fulfilled, is a direct reference to the Jewish audience of the fulfillment of the “seed” promised to Abraham and the coming promised Messiah that was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament. Jesus was asserting that He was the fulfillment of that promise. God’s timing to bring these things about had come.

Time: Literally means “appointed time” or “set time” conveying that the coming of Christ had been set at a specific time.

Fulfilled: completed, ended

Most versions of the Bible agree and use the same wording as is found here.

The children of Israel were caught off guard though because when the wise men came, seeking for the one who had been promised, all of Jerusalem was troubled.

Mat 2:2-3 NASB - "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

“The Kingdom of God is at hand”

The Kingdom of God referred to here is the Kingdom prophesied about by the prophets in the Old Testament.

The main focus of the Kingdom of God in this verse is the fact that Christ was finally

establishing His Kingdom in the hearts and minds of men.

Isa 11:1 NASB - Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

Jer 23:5 NASB - "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

Eze 34:23 NASB - "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

Eze 37:24 NASB - "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.

Dan 2:44 NASB - "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Dan 7:13-14 NASB - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Even though it was not the kingdom that the Jewish people were looking for, Christ was letting them know that it had appeared.

The phrase "is at hand" means that it is close.

Spiros Zodhiates says that this verb has reference to space, meaning that something is here.

Acknowledging the debate

There are some who believe that the phrases "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" refer to different things. However, as we can see from the passage in Matthew 19:23-24 Jesus uses these two phrases interchangeably. We also see different gospels recording Jesus saying the same phrase, but they are recorded in these gospels as one or the other of the interchangeable phrases regarding the Kingdom.

The Observations of “the Kingdom of God”.

The frequency which Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God.

It's important to note this early on in our study of the book of Mark, the importance that Christ places on the “Kingdom of God”.

In all of the Gospels, the words “Kingdom of God” or “Kingdom of Heaven” are used 82 times; 14 of those are used in Mark alone. Matthew and Luke supercede Mark in their use of these phrases by 35 and 31 respectively.

Throughout the entirety of scripture, these phrases are used 115 times.

For the sake of example consider the following scriptures:

Luk 8:1 NASB - Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him,

Luk 9:11 NASB - But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

Luk 11:20 NASB - "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

It is possible that the reason I had not seen this before was due to the prominent premillennial view of eschatology in which Christ will set up His kingdom at a future time, therefore there is a dismissal of these passages which refer to Christ and His Kingdom.

Prophets spoke of the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom.

Dan 7:13-14 NASB - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Daniel 2:44, 6:26, 7:27, Psalm 45:6, 145:13, Isaiah 9:7

Christ came to establish the Kingdom and fulfill the prophecies given about Himself.

Read Acts 2:22-36

Heb 12:1-2 NASB - Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 10:12-13, 8:1, 1:1-3

Christ also comes for the purpose of preaching the Gospel....of the Kingdom.

Luke 4:42-44 NASB - When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Luke 8:1, 9:2, 9:11, Acts 1:3, Matthew 3:2, 4:17

That same message Christ sent the disciples and all His followers to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Luk 9:2 NASB - And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

Luke 9:60, 10:9, 10:11, Acts 8:12, 19:8, 28:23, 28:31, Matthew 10:7

The coming of the Kingdom of God was the good news that Jesus was referring to.

Mat 4:23 NASB - Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matthew 24:14, Luke 16:16

The reason that this was good news is that it was the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to establish one who would sit on the throne forever and ever, but it was also good news because God offered man a way to be made right in the eyes of God. This could only happen by following Jesus' command to "repent and believe".

We have a hard time in the 21st century understanding what it means to be under a King because we don't see many, if any, examples of a kingdom in the nations of the world like those that existed during Jesus' day and we certainly don't live in a kingdom under the rule of a king.

This kingdom language is difficult for us to understand for that reason, but the people of Jesus' day knew exactly the implications of what He was talking about.

The Jews were looking for a King that would come and establish a physical kingdom on this earth to rid them of the oppressive Romans that had been taking over the world, following the pattern of previous rescues in times past when Israel had been under the burden of foreign oppression.

However, Jesus did not come to establish a physical Kingdom on earth as He mentions in John 18:36-37 Jhn 18:36-37 NASB - Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

By establishing His Kingdom in the hearts of men, He is taking care of a much bigger problem than the Romans, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." - Col 1:13-14 NASB

This is the reason Christ's message of the Kingdom of God is good news to all who hear it. It is a message in which Christ offers hope and forgiveness but commands repentance and belief. It is a message which requires the allegiance to be transferred from self and self-righteousness, from darkness, evil and sin, to an allegiance to the King of kings and the Lord of Lords.

Judgement will one day come from God Almighty upon those who spurn the righteous and eternal rule of King Jesus, and as such He is offering terms of peace if each person surrenders and obeys the command to repent and believe in Christ alone and dedicate their lives entirely to His service. This is the good news!

The impact that recognizing the importance of "the Kingdom of God" has had on my life

1. All of scripture is pointing to Christ and His kingdom.
2. Christ IS sitting on His throne and as ambassadors for Christ, we are called to advance His Kingdom by continuing to preach the message of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

The action steps

1. Repent

Jesus message conveyed the command to respond with action. He commanded that the people repent.

That interesting thing that we have to remember is that Christ's message was being preached to the Jews. These were God's people, not some nomadic, foreign people. They knew about God, they knew His word, and yet they spurned Him.

2. Believe

Jesus' message didn't just require action by repentance, but also a trusting faith focused relationship with Christ.

This was one of the ways that Jesus' message differed from John's message in that Christ required not just action by repentance but faith and trust in God in a personal relationship with Him.

The calling of Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John.

Calling of Christ's closest apostles

Three of these first four apostles that Jesus called were the ones that Jesus spent the most time with and disciplined more than the others.

1. We see Jesus conversing with Peter more than any of the other apostles throughout the Gospels.
2. Peter, James and John were the only ones Jesus took with Him up the mountain and saw Christ's transfiguration in addition to seeing Moses and Elijah.
3. All the other apostles were further away in the Garden of Gethsemane but Peter, James and John were privileged to be further in and closer to Jesus during His period of distress and agony at Jesus' own request.

Details of these men that Christ called

These men were called after Christ miraculously helped them catch fish in Luke 5.

The wealthiness of these four men

Contrary to what is commonly believed, the scripture and the historical knowledge of the occupation of fishing gives compelling reason for us to believe that these men were not low in status, poor, or regarded by society as a lower class citizen due to their profession, but that in actuality, they had a healthy business by fishing in the Galileean sea. (Mark 1:20 Having hired hands shows they had enough money to have someone to help)

What came as a surprise realization to me is that these four men had a partnership in the enterprise of fishing. They were all working together for the purpose of greater profitability.

Luk 5:10 NASB - and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

The application

1. Christ has made it plain that He commands all men to repent, therefore all men are forced to a decision. Either you will repent of your sin and turn away from it, or you will spurn the love and grace of God and reject His command to turn your allegiance to Him.

2. These men, though they had a good profession were called by Christ to leave all that they had and to follow Him. A question I have to ask myself is "Were that person to be me, would I have followed Christ 'immediately' as these men did"?

Mat 10:37-39 NASB - "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Mar 8:34-38 NASB - And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."