

**January 15, 2012**  
**JESUS ANNOUNCES HIS PURPOSE**  
**Mark 1:14-20**  
**By Tom and Alberta Ecker**

***Jesus Announces the Good News***

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***Jesus Calls His First Disciples***

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***Jesus Announces the Good News***

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**proclaiming the good news of God.***

The work of the forerunner, John the Baptist, has been completed and then he is arrested. John is more than the one who announces the presence of the hoped for Messiah; **his fate will be a picture of Jesus' own fate.** John the Baptist is Jesus' forerunner in ministry to Israel, in his conflict with the earthly powers that be, and in his brutal death. The literal translation of **“After John was put in prison”** is **“after John is handed over”** do we catch the subtlety of this? **Both** Jesus and John are “handed over” and **both** will suffer a violent death. Jesus knows as he begins his ministry that the same fate that befell John will be his own fate also. **Despite knowing this,** Jesus steps out on the world stage and announces **“The kingdom of God is near.”**

Jesus began his public ministry in the province of Galilee. Palestine had three major provinces. *Galilee was the northernmost province.* It contained beautiful lakes, forests, and mountains. Most of Jesus' ministry was conducted in this province. Jesus embarked on what is called his early Galilean ministry (**Mark 1:14–3:12**).

The beginning of Jesus' ministry is related to the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Mark does not give us the events that took place after the temptation of Jesus and the imprisonment of John. *The other Gospel writers fill in those details.* Mark concentrated on the **work of the servant.**

Jesus began his ministry of service by **proclaiming the good news of God**. The good news is both **from** God and **about** God. **This good news is the gospel that brings forgiveness, restoration, and new life in Christ Jesus**. Men and women have been longing to hear such a message. Now they not only hear it but **actually encounter the One (Christ Jesus) who is able to deliver it**.

John the Baptist was the herald of the **king**. Jesus is the herald of the **kingdom**. When Jesus Christ came into Galilee and began saying, **“The kingdom of God is near,”** he made reference to his own incarnation. He was saying, in effect, **“God’s rule has just broke into human history.”** In Mark the **kingdom of God** refers to a **present, spiritual kingdom** rather than a future, earthly one.

<sup>15</sup> **“The time has come,”** he said.  
**“The kingdom of God has come near.**  
**Repent and believe the good news!”**

The phrase **the time has come** shows the *exact timing of God*. The word translated “time” (*kairos*) means a *favorable, opportune, or significant time* as opposed to mere *chronology*. The only thing that counts for Mark is that “the time” that has come is being seen from the divine side and not just from the human side. Mark is revealing God’s perspective; nothing will ever be the same. Jesus was saying that the *critical moment in history had arrived*. God was now going to act decisively by **bringing redemption and restoration** to his people through his servant, Jesus. George Eldon says, “The reign of God is not a spatial category but **a dynamic event in which God intervenes powerfully in human affairs to achieve his unfading purposes.**”

Jesus announcement that the **“kingdom is near”** is the announcement of an **unchangeable event, the coming of God’s new world, which is even now breaking into the present**. *Jesus announces that the time of waiting for God’s intervention is over. Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and the kingdom of God is at hand*. In Jesus’ proclamation he is announcing **God’s decisive display of ruling power over the world as his purposes begin to be unfurled like a flag**.

As Jesus’ ministry progresses, Jesus will spend a lot of time through stories and parables telling people what the kingdom of God is like. This clearly shows that his understanding and view of the kingdom is different from their familiar view and he must correct their understanding. Jesus will radically change the idea of God’s reign for them and give them brand new images, brand new motifs, and brand new hopes. The dominion of God is so near that Mark believes that you can touch it in Jesus. Jesus was not mistaken about the nearness of the kingdom of God, despite the fact that almost two thousand years have passed since His announcement. Though the consummation of the kingdom awaits a future return of Christ, **its inauguration occurred during His initial ministry, especially with His atoning death**. This inauguration demands a response.

Jesus' message was that ***the kingdom of God is near***. The kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching. **The kingdom of God was simply the rule of Messiah on earth.** This had been promised in the Old Testament (e.g., *Exod. 15:18; Ps. 29:10; Isa. 43:15*), and the Jewish people had longed for it. **The kingdom "is near" because Jesus, the ruler of that kingdom, has now arrived.** Yes, the reality of this kingdom still demands that one **repent and believe**. John had already been preaching for the people to **repent**, but Jesus added another key word, **believe**. Only through **"repentance"** from their sinfulness and **"belief"** in the **good news** (i.e., the gospel and person of Jesus Christ) would they enter the kingdom. *Jesus was presenting urgency about the nearness of God's kingdom (himself) and the need to act decisively.*

### **Key Summary Elements of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15)**

John the Baptist was the herald of the king. When Jesus Christ came into Galilee and began saying, "The kingdom of God is near," **he made reference to his own incarnation.**

*Basileia* (kingdom) means, first, **the authority to rule as a king** and, second, **the realm over which the reign is exercised.** In the Old Testament, *malekut*, when used of God, almost always refers to his authority. We may think of the kingdom as primarily God's realm, **but it is first his authority.** He has authority as the Creator. In the New Testament, the kingdom of God is the **divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son.** When Jesus testified to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, he was not saying that he had no authority on earth. **He was saying that his authority was not given to him by anyone in this world. God the Father had granted him the authority of the kingdom (Luke 22:29).**

The Book of Isaiah pointed to **the kingship, and the authority**, of Jesus: *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isa. 9:6–7).*

Jesus separated the **present and future** aspects of the kingdom. His incarnation, earthly ministry, death, and resurrection **accomplished certain kingly objectives.** When earthly kings invaded a land, they usurped the reigning power and released any prisoners that the king had captured. **Christ's objective (purpose) was to usurp Satan, redeem humanity, and deliver people from the powers of evil.** Christ's **present reign** means the ultimate destruction of all hostile powers, the last of which is death. It brings to people "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (**Rom. 14:17**) and deliverance from the "dominion of darkness" (**Col. 1:13**). It is accomplished by the new birth (**John 3:3**).

Christ will exercise his rule until he subdues all that is hostile to God. In the age to come Jesus returns in glory and Satan will be defeated for all time (**Matt. 25:41**); the

dead in Christ will be raised in incorruptible bodies (**1 Cor. 15:42–50**) which are no longer subject to death; every knee will bow before him; and every tongue will confess him as Lord (**see Phil. 2:10–11**).

For some tension is caused by the **two comings of Christ**. The OT mainly focused on one coming of God's Messiah, a military, judgmental, glorious coming, but from the NT it is obvious that He came the first time as the Suffering Servant of **Isa. 53** and the humble king of **Zech. 9:9**. This in a sense has created two Jewish ages, the age of wickedness and rebellion, **which has been overlapping** with the new age of righteousness. Jesus *currently* reigns in the hearts of believers, but will one day reign over all creation. He will come like the OT predicted! **Believers live in “the already” versus “the not yet” of the kingdom of God.**

### **Jesus Calls His First Disciples**

<sup>16</sup> *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.* <sup>17</sup> *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”* <sup>18</sup> *At once they left their nets and followed him.*

<sup>19</sup> *When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.* <sup>20</sup> *Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

By beginning Jesus' ministry with this account, **Mark showed that the disciples were qualified to be witnesses of his entire ministry.** He showed the importance of discipleship. **He showed the way in which all should respond to Jesus' summons: promptly and completely.** He showed the inseparable relationship of discipleship and Christology. And he showed that **Jesus takes the initiative in making disciples: they do not seek him, but he seeks them.**

<sup>16</sup> *As Jesus walked beside the **Sea of Galilee**, he saw **Simon** and his brother **Andrew** casting a net into the lake, for they were **fishermen**.*

**Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee.** The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful fresh-water lake. Fed by the waters of the upper Jordan River, it is seven hundred feet below sea level, fourteen miles long, and six miles wide. It was also called the Lake of Gennesaret (**Luke 5:1**) and the Sea of Tiberias (**John 6:1; 21:1**). In Old Testament times, this lake was known as the Sea of Kinnereth (**Num. 34:11**). Most of Jesus' teaching and miracles were performed in this area.

A lot of fishing took place at this lake. Josephus, a famous historian of the Jews, recorded that up to 330 fishing boats sailed this lake. Among those who fished this lake for a livelihood were **Simon** and his brother, **Andrew**. Mark says nothing of a previous encounter of these two disciples with Jesus. These men may have been followers of John. Perhaps they were encouraged by John to follow Jesus. Also, they may have been in the crowd when Jesus was preaching.

**Mark shows Jesus is walking along the Sea of Galilee with the purpose of calling his first disciples.** Garland states, “Whatever their circumstances, these men show their **repentance**, their desire **“to turn,”** by dropping **everything** to heed Jesus’ call. Their repentance is *more than just a matter of an internal transformation*, they turn into something that they are not now, *from fisherman to fishers of men.*” Jesus called **Simon and Andrew to Come, follow me.**

<sup>17</sup> **“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said,  
**“and I will send you out to fish for people.”**

It is striking that Jesus calls his disciples to **“follow me.”** The people were familiar with the old prophets who admonished people to follow God and to learn only Torah from them, yet Jesus is saying **with authority** that now people **must follow him** and **obey** his words. The call to the disciples so hooks and overpowers them that **their lives will never be the same again.**

The idea of **following Jesus** is frequent in Mark and **denotes discipleship.** The idea is that of **responding to a summons, attachment to a person, acceptance of authority, and imitation of example. The implication of continuation and pursuing a goal also is included.** The **purpose** of the summons was to make the two fishermen **“fishers of men.”** The idea of God calling persons to fish for people is found in the Old Testament, most clearly in **Jer 16:16**; but there the purpose was to bring people to judgment. Here the **purpose** was to escape judgment. Note that Mark pictured Jesus as an example of what he required of others.

Jesus’ task was to gather around him a **“fisher’s of men”** community that he could teach so they might be sharers of this good news. Jesus was not going to be a lone prophet but a leader, **whose task as Messiah is to create a community of believers who will carry on his kingdom work.** Jesus, after his resurrection, would commission his disciples to carry the gospel **“unto all the world.”** Here in Mark Jesus began the preparation of his disciples to carry out that commission.

Jesus does not use the **analogy of fishing** as a mere reference to his mission. When a person hooks a fish, the life of that fish is forever changed, **it has fatal consequences for the fish, and its life cannot go on as before.** It is so for us also, when we are hooked by Jesus we die to ourselves and we are transformed by the new life that Jesus gives us. This fishing analogy portrays the transforming power of God’s decree that brings judgment and death to the old self and brings true life to the new self. We see this pledge of a new creation in **Romans 6:1-11.**

<sup>18</sup> **At once they left their nets and followed him.**

Jesus was calling Simon and Andrew to the urgent task of rescuing people from the impending judgment implied by the coming of the kingdom in the person and work of Jesus. This **urgency** demanded a response. The phrase **at once** indicates this urgency. **Leaving their nets** showed their willingness **to make a total commitment as (followers) disciples of Christ.** Mark shows the ideal response to the command of

Jesus. **It should be immediate.** Here some intimation of the cost of discipleship is shown. Simon and Andrew evidently left a lucrative business and perhaps also their families to follow Jesus (*cf. Mark 1:29*).

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he saw **James** son of Zebedee and his brother **John** in a **boat**, preparing their nets.  
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, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.**

**James and John** are mentioned together nine times in Mark with James's name appearing twice in two of the passages. John alone is mentioned in **Mark 9:38**. They also were "**called**," another term closely related to discipleship. The word **boat** here means that these were large fishing boats. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were prosperous middle class fishermen (i.e. had hired servants). John apparently had business contracts to regularly sell fish to the priestly families in Jerusalem (*i.e. John was known by them, cf. John 18:15–16*).

If the action of Simon and Andrew illustrates **prompt** response that of James and John illustrates **complete** response. The price of discipleship is further illustrated in their actions. They not only left their livelihood; they also broke family ties and tradition by leaving their father. **Following Jesus is costly and sometimes discipleship may even involve severing family ties.**

In the first eight chapters of Mark, the disciples do not again appear in so favorable a light as they do here. Mark wanted to show that even the original disciples had faults and yet were used by Jesus. The same is true of later disciples including us.

## PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS

### Jesus Tells Us of the Kingdom of God in *Mark 1:14–20*

Jesus brings us back down to earth as he breaks into the narrative **announcing his purpose**. The proclaimer proclaims the gospel (*Mark 1:14–15*). There is no time to lose. God is present and **demand a response** and **a belief** in the good news.

**Mark is full of urgency.** Things happen immediately. Jesus walks beside the Sea of Galilee and people leave their nets to become disciples. One theme of Mark's Gospel is a readiness to follow Jesus. This opening story perfectly illustrates what is expected in response to the good news. *Jesus as the sacrificial servant begins his ministry by forming a team to help him preach the good news of the kingdom.*

- What is the kingdom of God?
- How urgent is it for us to proclaim the kingdom of God?

- What does believe mean? Is it a belief in Jesus as our Lord and God?
- The disciples leave their nets and families to follow Christ. What do we need to walk away from?
- What is the authority that Jesus has, and how do we recognize it in the church today?