

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Read Mark 1.16-45

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING CONTEXT

1/ In our [last lesson](#), we noted how Mark introduced **the Gospel of Jesus Christ** and what the prominent tenets and distinguishing characteristics are of Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

2/ Not only was **The Gospel the Good News about Jesus Christ**, but **The Gospel IS Jesus Christ**, and it was also *the Good News that Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed* / vv 14-15: **...Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel!”**

3/ Now, in that summary statement that Jesus proclaimed, we will hear the major themes that Mark will proceed to expand and expound upon as he relates to us what Jesus said, meant, and did to proclaim **the Gospel of the Kingdom of God** [see **Matthew 4.23, et al**]:

- **The time is fulfilled.** The ‘time’ God had promised and the faithful people of God had long expected and longed for ‘has been fulfilled.’ So, what ‘time’ is this? It is the ‘time’ of the arrival and establishment of the Kingdom God had promised He would bring into the world / see **Daniel 44-45, for example.**
- **And the Kingdom of God is at hand.** With this proclamation, Jesus announces that, with His arrival and appearance, **the Kingdom of God is here!** The Kingdom of God has come in Himself, the King. So, what is this **Kingdom of God**? Summarily, the Kingdom of God is God’s rule over all / **Psalm 103.19.** Jesus Christ has come to ‘invade’ the world of time, space, and history ... and inaugurate, usher in, God’s sovereign, redemptive, and covenant purpose and will. **Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven [Matthew 6.10; 25.34].** This **Kingdom of God** has both a past history; a present history being fulfilled in our present age; and a future perfect fulfillment when our Lord returns [see **1 Corinthians 15.24-28; Matthew 25.34; Revelation 11.15; numerous others**]. We are now in what we call the ‘*already / not yet*’ age of the **Kingdom of God.**

4/ So what Mark will proceed to show us is how Jesus Christ inaugurates the perfection of that final Kingdom by the acts He will perform and the messages He will proclaim through those acts. *If you will use this summary key to help you understand the Kingdom of God, you will see more clearly why Mark specifically highlights the various accounts he gives of Jesus’ life and ministry: The Kingdom of God is God’s purposed redemption and restoration of all things – the whole creation – back to the perfect Kingdom order in which He created it ... even better – through Jesus Christ and His Gospel!*

5/ That’s why, as Mark proceeds to give us the account of **the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**, he will show us, especially in this first half of **Mark [chs 1.16-8.26]**, Jesus’ ever-expanding sovereign rule and authority over all the forces and influences of sin that have ruined, marred, and broken the creation and our lives: unbelief, alienation from God, human sickness and disease, and especially the demonic world under Satan’s rule [see **2 Corinthians 4.3-6; John 8.44; 10.10, et al**]. Jesus Christ has come to proclaim and exercise His sovereign authority over them all ... **and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross [Colossians 1.15-20].**

6/ Here’s how Mark describes and demonstrates Jesus’ sovereign rule and reign by proclaiming **The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.** Our response must be to **repent and believe in the Gospel!**

I / ch 1.16-20 / Jesus calls the first disciples

1/ Jesus demonstrates His authority, sovereignty, and Lordship over the faith, wills, and lives of those whom He calls to follow Him. When He calls Simon and Andrew – and James and John – to ‘follow’ Him, He is commanding that they **repent, and believe in the Gospel of His Kingdom** by surrendering their all to Him. And, it is **Him** that He commands that they follow ... not a tradition or a movement or an agenda.

2/ Since they were fishermen by trade and vocation, His command means that their vocation from that moment on will be to commit and employ their lives to obeying and serving Him. They obeyed, thus submitting to His authority, Lordship, and Kingdom.

3/ Mark is also pointing out here that the Kingdom of God is not only His authority over our external activities; but more, God's Kingdom rules over our innermost hearts and wills. We are 'born' into a spiritual relationship with God through His Gospel [see **John 3.1-5**] as well as conformity to His Kingdom rule in all our external activities. **See 1 Corinthians 6.9-11.**

4/ This same call to exclusive discipleship of following Jesus in this way sets the template and pattern for all the rest of His disciples who will believe on Him and follow Him for all time – including us.

II / ch 1.21-28 / Jesus heals a man with an 'unclean,' demonic spirit

1/ This event happened in Capernaum. Capernaum had become Jesus' adopted 'hometown' and where He performed many of His miraculous acts as well as much of His teaching ministry [see **Matthew 4.12-17**]. Capernaum was a thriving center of commerce and a crossroads of major trade routes that ran through the city. When we consult all the Gospels, we can pinpoint at least twelve events in Jesus' life and ministry that are pinned to Capernaum. It was also the subject of a scathing condemnation by Jesus because they didn't accept and believe on Him when they had witnessed His mighty works and teaching [**Matthew 11.20-24**].

2/ NOTE: Mark introduces the word '*authority*' here – and he will use this word at least ten times throughout his Gospel account. This '*authority*' is Jesus' exercise of His Kingdom Lordship. **And they were astonished [awe-struck] at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had *authority*, and not as the scribes.** Jesus' teaching was with His own first-hand '*authority*' as One sent from God. He was teaching from His own credibility as the Truth. It was well-known that their 'experts in the Law,' or 'scribes,' derived their authority from endlessly droning on and citing the predecessor teachers who supported their interpretations. Jesus spoke from His own *authoritative* knowledge of the Truth – He *was* the Truth He was teaching.

3/ When Jesus confronts this demonic 'unclean' spirit in this man ... in the synagogue ... He was confronting the all-out assault Satan was mounting against Him. As we read through the Gospels, we have to note how prevalent demonic activity was, not just in that locality, but all of it targeted against Jesus and His Kingdom ministry. It's almost as if Satan had put out an all-points-bulletin for his demonic forces to go to Galilee and make war against the Kingdom of God that had come. The demon spirit recognizes Jesus for who He is – **What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God [see James 2.18-19].** It isn't enough just to know who Jesus is and have an intellectual knowledge of Him – you must repent of your sins and believe **the Gospel of His Kingdom** to be saved.

4/ The truth of the Kingdom is: *Jesus HAD come to destroy the kingdom of Satan and the dominion he exercises over his subjects.* **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil [1 John 3.8].** Jesus exorcised the unclean spirit – commanded him to come out of the man. **And they were all amazed [awe-struck], so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with *authority*! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!"**

5/ This is another major and prominent exercise of Jesus' **Gospel of the Kingdom**. Satan had introduced sin into our world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve and brought all the ruin, degradation, perversion, and curse of sin that has marred, not only the creation, but also the image-bearers of God. Jesus has come to reconcile and restore the rule of God through His **Gospel of the Kingdom of God**. Satan's doom was sealed [**John 12.31**] until finally ...**and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur ... and...will be tormented day and night forever and ever [Revelation 20.10].**

III / ch 1.29-34 / Jesus heals Simon Peter's mother-in-law ... and many others

1/ Sickness and disease are among the multitude of curses that have plagued our world since the introduction of sin in the Garden of Eden. Jesus will demonstrate and exercise His authority over all this as well by His authority and **proclaiming the Gospel of God and His Kingdom**. In this case, it is Peter's mother-in-law.

She was deathly sick with a ‘fever.’ After teaching in the synagogue that day, Jesus goes home with Peter [who also lived in Capernaum] and heals her of her fever. Jesus is showing that in the ultimate, final, and perfect fulfillment of the **Kingdom of God, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away [Revelation 21.4]. ...and sorrow and sighing shall flee away [Isaiah 35.10].**

2/ When Jesus heals this sickness – and many/all the others He healed – He is giving us an object-lesson and ‘earnest/down-payment’ of that ultimate fulfillment in **the Kingdom of God** that is proclaimed in **The Gospel of God**.

3/ As Mark explains, **that evening at sundown**, after the Sabbath-day rest had expired, **they brought to Him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons...**

IV / ch 1.35-39 / Jesus prays and communes with His Father ... and proceeds to preach in the neighboring towns

1/ This account in Jesus’ life and ministry is so telling, so instructive, and so power-packed on so many levels. What Jesus will demonstrate here by His own example is *where the power of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God comes from ... and where real spiritual activity of the Kingdom of God is transacted.*

2/ **And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed.** *“In this short verse, four verbs (“rising” / “went” / “departed” / “prayed”) describe Jesus’ persistent goal of cultivating and maintaining close fellowship with His Heavenly Father (cf. 6.46; 14.32-39), despite often pressing circumstances.” / Hans F. Bayer, ESV Expository Commentary.*

- **First, we must note that if Jesus prayed, then we must pray.** Keep in mind, the previous day had been a most intense, stressful, and action-packed day. Just think of all we are told Jesus did just in Mark’s account here: He had taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath day; He had warred with demons; He had healed Peter’s mother-in-law; He had healed many others and had cast out demons well into the evening and night before. All of this had taken a heavy toll on His human constitution, energies, and resources – He was physically, emotionally, spiritually drained and exhausted. But Jesus knows that His strength, power, and authority comes from His communion with His Father. Yes! He is God incarnate – but He is also submitting to His human-form servanthood. And so, He prays to commune with His Father whom He loves ... and also to receive the necessary strength and power He must have to fulfill the Father’s Kingdom mission. ***I repeat, if Jesus prays, then how much more must we pray if we are to follow Him in the mission He has sent us to fulfill.***
- I have been so impressed by this model for ministry Jesus exemplifies since preaching through Mark years ago in my former pastorate. I called this instructive lesson: *The Mechanics and the Dynamics of Ministry*. We so often focus only on the ‘mechanics’: the tasks, activities, functions we perform in the course of ministry. But what we also so often neglect is the ‘dynamics,’ how those ‘mechanics’ must work, if indeed they effectively work at all in the ways we want them to work and accomplish the ends and results for which we perform them. The ‘mechanics’ will not work and won’t be effective without the ‘dynamics’ of the power of God. We are not going to perform the mechanics of our ministries, however well-trained we may be, or how experienced we are at doing them, or how well we may perform them ... if we are not connected with the ‘dynamics’ of the power of God without which we can do nothing. *It reminds me of when I was a teenager and just starting to drive – my car would intermittently not start. I took it to our service station mechanic, Mr. Bean [I don’t remember his first name – we called everyone ‘Mr. ’]. Mr. Bean raised the hood, checked the battery, took his wire brush and scrubbed out the insides of the terminal clamps, tightened it back up, and that was it. As he was doing this, I overheard him saying to himself, “The car runs no better than its connection to the power.” I still remember that so well and often. So it is with us.*
- We must also note how Mark keeps coming back to the ‘wilderness/desert/deserted places’ motif. He will employ this word ‘eremos’ nine times in his Gospel, and six of those mentions are here in

chapter 1: vv 3, 4, 12, 13, 35, 45. [see also ch 6.31, 32, 35]. Throughout Scripture, the *'wilderness / desert / deserted places'* have been venues of purification, preparation, testing and temptation. These are the times and places [*'desert experiences'*] where God often isolates us, brings us to the ends of ourselves and resources, and gets us alone with Him so He can teach us that we must depend on Him – train and equip us for His Kingdom work – and work His power and will through us.

3/ After this time of prayer and communion with His Father, Jesus announces to His disciples, **Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for this is why I came out. And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.** Which is what He also commands us to do in our own time: **And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come [Matthew 24.14].**

V / ch 1.40-45 / Jesus touches and cleanses a leper

1/ Jesus exercises and demonstrates His **Kingdom authority** not only over another physical illness and malady, but one that is pronounced 'unclean' and that separates, isolates, estranges them from others.

2/ This term 'leper' [*'lepros'*] refers to a wide range of skin diseases, though it would also include the flesh-eating disease we most often think of – what we call 'Hansen's Disease.' What is most significant about the Biblical leprosy is that it was considered to be an 'uncleanness' and required ostracism and isolation from contact with others in the community. It is extensively treated in **Leviticus 13**. We are most familiar with **verse 35: The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.**

3/ This leper has heard of both Jesus' ability and willingness to heal; so he approaches Jesus, casts himself at Jesus' feet in humility and homage, and begs for mercy – appealing to Jesus' willingness: **If you will, you can make me clean.**

4/ No one was permitted to touch the leper, and the leper was forbidden to touch another person or object. If another person came into physical contact with a leper, then that person was considered 'unclean' and must go through the same 'cleaning' regimen as the leper until it was demonstrated that he was 'clean.' But, Jesus IS both able and willing to cleanse him: **Moved with pity [a deep, inward, even convulsive, sympathy and compassion], He stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."** Not only is Jesus **touched with the feeling of our infirmities [Hebrews 4.15 KJV]**, but He reaches out to us and touches us with His own Divine healing and cleansing Grace.

5/ There is so much we can say – and will say as we work our way through Mark – about the numerous times Jesus instructed people He healed and His disciples with words like these: **See that you say nothing to anyone...** or some similar injunction. We'll talk later about what is called *'the Messianic secret'* and why Jesus wants to reveal the full disclosure of His Messianic identity/mission in His own way and time. I'll just say here that it has a lot to do with the Jewish people's expectation of what their promised Messiah would do when He did come – what kind of Messianic Prophet and King would He be? Their expectations were for a political Messiah who would immediately throw off the Roman yoke of bondage, lead a 'freedom movement' and rebellion, and liberate them from foreign oppression [see, for example, **John 6.15**]. That was NOT the **Kingdom of God** Jesus had come to establish [see **John 18.33-37**]. He WILL inaugurate and establish **The Kingdom of God**, but it will be a redemptive, Covenant of Grace, **Kingdom of God**.

6/ When Jesus will commission His disciples to go to other places and do what they have seen Him do – and what He will give them authority and power to do – He will instruct them to announce: **Heal the sick in it and say to them, "The Kingdom of God has come near to you" ... Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near** [Luke 10.9, 11]. So it is when He first teaches continuously and performs these acts of **The Gospel of the Kingdom of God**.

7/ This is who Jesus is and what He has come to do: **...proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand [near / here]; repent and believe in the Gospel."**

"Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the Glory, forever. Amen!"