

Jesus Begins His Ministry

Mark 1:14-20

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Today, we're going to look at Mark's perspective of the start of Jesus' ministry. I want us to see Jesus' early ministry activities and what we can learn from them.

So, follow along as we examine two key things Jesus did to launch His ministry.

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First, we see that Jesus preached Good News.

Mark 1:14-15, "*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*"

The foundation of Jesus' ministry was first and foremost preaching. The Greek word for "preaching" means to "proclaim." It's different from teaching.

The purpose of teaching is to convey information, to educate and give knowledge and wisdom; the purpose of preaching is persuasion.

Preaching is intended to arrest people's attention, to help them to see the need to change the direction of their lives in order to follow God.

Preaching starts with a call to the lost to be saved, but it also includes a call for the saved to sacrifice, dedicate, and reexamine their lives while encouraging discipleship, continual repentance, and obedience.

There are many aspects of biblical ministry, including fellowship, worship, learning, and service, but they're all built upon Biblical preaching from God's Word.

But notice what Jesus was preaching. Mark 1:14 calls it the "*the kingdom of God*," or the "Good News."

Now, the "Good News" Jesus preached wasn't the fully formed Good News Paul said was the Gospel that saved the Corinthians, namely Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

The Gospel Jesus preached was formative. It pointed people to Himself as the Messiah; the chosen one for God's action on earth.

Only later would He explain how he would be killed and rise from the dead. Yet, up to the time of His death, this part of Jesus' teaching fell on deaf ears.

When Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection unfolded, the disciples really didn't understand what was happening.

It was only when God opened their eyes, after His resurrection, that they began to grasp the nature of the Gospel as the truth that salvation was provided through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

But the kernel of truth that's in both Jesus' Gospel and Paul's Gospel was the centrality of Jesus Christ as the Messiah who had come in fulfilment of prophecy.

The actual content of Jesus' preaching is found in verse 15, He preached, "*The time has come*," he said. "*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*"

Let's break that down. **First**, Jesus preached that the time is fulfilled, or as He says, "*The time has come*."

The first time Jesus preached, it was the shortest sermon in the Bible, but it drilled home this very theme. Luke records it in Luke 4 which took place right after Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Luke 4:16-21, *"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

That was Christ's Good News: that the time of fulfilled prophecy had come, and it was all wrapped up in HIM.

Second, He said, *"The kingdom of God has come near."* The kingdom of God is called the kingdom of heaven in Matthew.

Now, the Jews believed that the kingdom of heaven or God was an actual geographic kingdom which would be ruled by the Messiah and headquartered in Jerusalem.

But it had a broader meaning, even in the Old Testament. It meant the sphere of God's rulership rather than His kingship over a geographical kingdom.

In that sense, the kingdom of God referred first and foremost to a voluntary submission to the rulership of God.

But there are also prophecies referring to a future, literal, geographical kingdom during the Millennium.

The Jews, under the harsh hand of Rome, seemed to only think in terms of that visible, geographical kingdom, regardless that Jesus was talking about an invisible kingdom.

A kingdom He said was not of this world, but a kingdom where God rules the hearts of His subjects and to be a part of this kingdom required a response.

So, the **third** part of His message was to “*repent and believe the good news.*” The time of decision had come. It was time to repent.

It was time for them to change their mind about in what they were trusting. They were to turn from their objects of trust; their heritage, their traditions, and their self-righteousness.

Jesus was telling them to prepare their hearts for the Messiah because the Messiah had come and as time went on, He demonstrated through His teachings, His authority over demons, and His miracles that HE was that Messiah.

The effect of Jesus’ preaching was remarkable. John’s disciples even complained to him about Jesus’ success.

John 3:26, “*They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”*

But John understood that he was only sent to prepare the way for Messiah. Jesus was that Messiah. John 3:30, John explained that “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*”

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Jesus's next step to launch His ministry was to assemble a ministry team

Mark 1:16-20 – “*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. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*”

People were flocking to Jesus! They were coming from the four corners of Israel and Judah and the regions roundabout. Many were repenting, believing, and being baptized in the name of Jesus.

Among them were four fishermen: Simon, Andrew, James, and John. They believed the kingdom was imminent. They didn't understand how, but they were sure.

They believed Jesus was the Messiah, though they had no idea how He would establish His rule and reign, but they repented and believed that He was the long-awaited Messiah.

Yet, they wouldn't have grasped the spiritual aspect of the Messiah's mission. John's proclamation, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” would have been puzzling to them.

Their conception of the Messiah's mission was limited, but the one thing they did was believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

As they fished, they must have talked about this remarkable teacher and preacher. Whenever there was an opportunity, they probably were off to sit at Jesus' feet.

Then, one day, as they were hard at work in their profession as fishermen, Jesus called them to be followers of Him and instantly they responded in obedience.

This is one of the most famous acts of obedience in history. And what a great decision it was for them! Prior to that day they probably thought they were happy and fulfilled.

Their lives revolved about their village and their families. Their conversations would have consisted of fishing trade talk, local gossip, family affairs, and local politics.

But after answering Jesus's call, their lives changed dramatically! They got to live with the very Son of God, to know Him face-to-face, and personally hear Him preach.

They heard His wonderful stories and doctrinal teachings. They witnessed the casting out of demons and observed all His miracles.

They even witnessed Christ's crucifixion and burial. They saw Him alive after His resurrection and watched as He ascended to heaven!

After that, they were personally part of the early church and were used by God to grow Christianity from an obscure Jewish sect to a worldwide movement.

Their lives were broadened, their minds expanded, and their vision enlarged.

Later, John, this simple fisherman, no doubt with little education, would become the Bishop of Ephesus and pen five books of the Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Peter, a poor local fisherman, would end up ministering in Rome and writing three letters of the New Testament. Andrew would evangelize as far as the borders of Russia.

Knowing Christ turns us from the trivial to the sublime, from our small, provincial lives to a worldwide focus, from little things to BIG things! Knowing Christ improves us, enlarges us, enriches us, and deepens us.

Jesus promised these four disciples that if they followed Him, He would make them “fishers of men.” When we follow Christ, we’re not satisfied for only ourselves to know Jesus. We want others to know.

We want to persuade others to come to Jesus. We want our lights to shine brightly. We want to clean up our lives so that we can be bright lights for Jesus. What a great privilege we have to become fishers of men!

Although, in this passage, Mark only records the calling of four Apostles, there were twelve in all.

But why have any Apostles? **One reason** was to have witnesses to the acts that authenticated Him as the Son of God.

After Jesus’ resurrection, the eleven remaining apostles selected a replacement for Judas Iscariot.

Peter said in Acts 1:21-22, *“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”*

There was no room in early Christianity for myth or rumors. What Jesus said and did was heard and seen by thousands, but in particular there was a group of disciples who SAW IT ALL.

This is why Mark tells us of the calling of these 4 key disciples early in his gospel. He wants us to know that there were witnesses who could authenticate everything in His Gospel.

The **second reason** for the Apostles was to carry out the Great Commission.

The Great Commission called on the Apostles to make disciples in all nations, to baptize them, and teach them to observe all Christ's commandments.

This same commission applies to all of us today by extension, but was given directly to the Apostles themselves.

It was to be their job to be the instruments through which Jesus would build His church, by leading people to salvation, through discipleship, and planting churches.

It was these apostles who guided the church from its infancy in the small city of Jerusalem until it became a worldwide movement Satan could not contain.

They provided the leadership and guidance needed to steer it into truths Jesus had taught them and commanded them to teach and model.

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Conclusion

When we look at the start of Jesus' ministry, we might think, okay, that's remarkable and exciting. But what does that have to do with me?

First, if you've not turned from sin, self-righteousness, and religion and ritual to trust in Jesus Christ alone, the Messiah, the Son of God, God in the flesh, you don't know what you're missing!

When you know Jesus, you not only receive eternal life, but abundant life—life at its best; life at its fullest; life at its most fulfilling.

Second, if you're a believer, you're a fisher of men. Look for opportunities to bring up spiritual issues in order to move people a little closer to Jesus.

Pray for a friend to be saved. Develop a relationship with him or her to earn the right to share the Gospel with them. Invite people to church so they can hear the Gospel.

Last, see the centrality of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is about JESUS. Mark's focus is JESUS.

Every page is designed to focus our attention on the Son of God, His power, His love, His compassion, His patience and His judgment and hatred of sin.

In your life, keep Jesus as your focus, not politics, or issues, or anything else. Keep Jesus as the focal point and center of your life.