

Introduction

1. In today's study in Mark, we will look at the central message of Jesus' early preaching.
2. This study caused me to think about my first preaching experiences.
 - a. From 1988-91, I went into central Mexico as a lay volunteer on mission trips to Tampico and Monte. I preached several times through a translator on those trips.
 - b. On 3/19/88 I supplied for my pastor, Norman Fry, at First Baptist Church Friendswood, TX.
 - c. On 7/14/91 and 7/12/92 I brought the evening message at my home church First Baptist Fairlea, WV.
 - d. On 6/23/92 I assisted Bro. Fry as I spoke at the funeral of a friend.
 - e. On 12/27/92 I spoke at Bayou Vista Baptist Mission—now Faith Community Church.
 - 1) I was still in seminary and was invited to speak at this mission plant.
 - 2) I remember that my parents were visiting and went with us. My family plus my parents constituted about half of those in attendance that Sunday between Christmas and New Year.
 - 3) My sermon was "Burning Bright for God's Glory" from Mt 5:14-16.
 - f. I am thankful to all those saints who have patiently listened to my sermons through the years. Hopefully, I am continually improving.
3. Here is what Mark recorded about the early preaching of Jesus.

4. Read Mk 1:14-15.**A. The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry (14)**

1. Jesus' ministry began as John the Baptist's ministry came to a close.
 - a. John had come ". . . preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4).
 - b. John's baptism was a preparatory act as those undergoing it looked forward to the coming of God's ultimate Messiah, the one who would follow after John. They were preparing themselves for his appearance and for the inauguration of the kingdom of God.
 - c. John told the people to look forward to a more important baptism that would come with the appearing of Messiah: "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1:8).
 - d. John fearlessly and continuously confronted the sins of Jewish King Herod who had John imprisoned. Herod was tricked by his lover Herodias into having John beheaded (cf., Mk 6:17-29, Mt 14:1-12).
 - e. Near the end of his life, John the Baptist's disciples came to him with this report: ". . . 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" (Jn 3:26).
 - f. John the Baptist replied to them--**Read Jn 3:27-30**.
 - g. As John's ministry came to a close, the ministry of Jesus was just beginning.
2. Mark picks up his narrative "After John was put in prison (Gk., *paradidomai* – lit. "handed over")"
 - a. This is the same word used later in Mark to describe Jesus' betrayal and arrest (cf., Mk 9:31, 10:33, 14:21,41)
 - b. The use of the word here is a possible foreshadowing of what will also happen to Jesus later on.
3. Jesus went back to Galilee.
 - a. Jesus had come from "Nazareth in Galilee" (Mk 1:9) and returned there (Mk 1:14).
 - b. Remember that Galilee was Gentile territory. Mark's primary audience was Roman Gentiles.
4. Jesus went back to Galilee "proclaiming the good news of God" (14)
 - a. The word "proclaiming" (Gk., *kerusso*) is the same word used to describe John the Baptist's preaching in Mk 1:4.
 - b. Jesus had now taken up the ministry for which John had prepared the way.
 - c. The general subject of Jesus' preaching was the "good news of God (Gk., *euaggelion tou theou*)."
 - 1) This good news or gospel is the central subject of Mark's gospel and was introduced in Mark 1:1—"The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the son of God . . ."
 - 2) Jesus came from God to reveal the good news of God--He was the Messiah whom the people had long awaited.
 - 3) Jesus proclaimed the gospel. He is the gospel. Jesus, the gospel, brings good news about the kingdom of God.

5. The word “gospel” (Gk., *euaggelion* = “good news”) is an important word. Let’s review its meaning.
 - a. Jesus did not write any of the four gospel accounts.
 - b. Jesus is the gospel and the central subject of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the gospels.
 - c. The gospels are not biographies. They are narratives of certain teachings and actions of Jesus focused primarily on his three years of earthly ministry with special focus on his passion and resurrection.
 - d. The gospels did not record everything that Jesus did or said. The Apostle John wrote, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (Jn 21:25).
 - e. The four written gospels have similarities and dissimilarities.
 - 1) It is good when they all agree, but it appears problematic when they do not.
 - 2) For example, several of the parables are given only in the Gospel of Luke.
 - 3) Another example is the resurrection accounts of Matthew and Mark who say there was one angel/man at the tomb while Luke says there were two men.
 - 4) Only two gospels (i.e., Matthew and Luke) give a birth narrative.
 - 5) All four gospels record the resurrection.
 - 6) There is no contradiction in these differences only evidence of the different viewpoints and observations of the gospel writers.
 - 7) Note how we draw from the other gospel accounts as aids to our study of Mark.
 - f. There have been many efforts to harmonize the gospels.
 - 1) Many scholars believe that Mark was the earliest writer and that the others borrowed from his version. Some writers included certain material and left out other parts, based on what they intended to emphasize. Taken together, they give us a richer, fuller context and perspectives.
 - 2) Most scholars harmonize only the “synoptics” (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke) because John is so different from those three gospels.
 - 3) A.T. Robertson’s harmony of all four gospels is a classic reference work.
 - g. There are two main types of material in each gospel.
 - 1) Direct teachings by Jesus
 - 2) Narratives about Jesus
 - 3) Our text in this study is a combination of narrative and direct teaching.
 - h. Each gospel was written to persuade people to enter into personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Mark wrote to persuade Roman Gentiles. He did not include genealogies since Romans were not interested in pedigree. He emphasized miracles and power which carried weight with Romans.
 - 2) Matthew wrote to persuade Jews. He traced Jesus’ genealogy back through David to Abraham. He referred to the kingdom of heaven rather than the kingdom of God out of respect for Jewish reverence of the divine name.
 - 3) Luke wrote to persuade Greek Gentiles. He traced Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam—the progenitor of all mankind.
 - 4) John wrote to persuade philosophically minded Greco-Romans. He traced the incarnate Christ back to the pre-incarnate Word.

B. Jesus’ Initial Preaching (15)

1. Mark shared only a summary of Jesus’ preaching, the key points, the Cliff Notes version:

“The time has come . . . The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news” (15).
2. “The time has come” (Gk., *peplerotai ho kairos*).
 - a. Mark is not making a statement of chronological sequence but marking the beginning of a new event.
 - b. The season of John’s ministry was at a close and the season of Jesus’ ministry was beginning.
 - c. This was a critical season in human history as God brought his plan for saving sinful humanity to fruition in the gospel, Jesus, Messiah, the son of God.
3. “The kingdom of God has come near” (Gk., *heggiken he basileai tou theou*).
 - a. The “kingdom of God” is a major theme in all three of the synoptic gospels.
 - 1) Mark referred to it 14x (cf., Mk 1:15; 4:11,26,30; 9:1,47; 10:14,15,23,24,25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43).
 - 2) Matthew referred to it 4x but also uses the equivalent term “kingdom of heaven” 33x instead of “kingdom of God” out of respect for his Jewish audience who avoided writing or vocalizing the holy name of God. He also mentioned “kingdom” 17x.
 - 3) Luke referred to the kingdom of God 32x.

- 4) The kingdom of God is mentioned twice in John (cf., Jn 3:3,5), 6x in Acts, 8x times in the writings of Paul, and once in Revelation (Rev 12:10).
 - 5) The kingdom of God is an important topic in the New Testament!
- b. What is the kingdom of God?
- 1) Much of Jesus' teaching and many of his parables relate to the kingdom of God.
 - 2) For the Jews, the kingdom of God was a future, earthly kingdom in which God through Israel would rule the nations of the earth. They looked forward to its coming.
 - 3) Mark and the other New Testament writers focus more on a present, spiritual kingdom rather than a future, earthly one.
 - a) Jesus himself pointed to his kingdom, the kingdom of God, as being spiritual rather than temporal in his trial before Pilate. (cf., Jn 18:28-40).
 - b) However, there are some exceptions (e.g., Mk 14:25; 15:43) where the kingdom of God is referred to as a future kingdom.
 - c) It was not a political movement or social revolution in itself, although there are political and social implications for those who wish to be a part of it.
 - d) I agree with Mark Strauss who writes, "The best interpretation of the data is that the kingdom has been inaugurated through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection but awaits consummation in the future. . . Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as both present and future, as 'already' but also 'not yet'" (Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 440).
 - 4) Jesus came as the representative of the King, actually the King himself in flesh, to confront humanity with the reality of God's presence with them and to open the way for sinful humans to leave the kingdom of this world, which is filled with sin, hatred, and death, and become members of the kingdom of God, which is filled with love, grace, and life.
 - a) Jesus demonstrated in each gospel his power, authority, and sovereignty as the King of the kingdom as he subdued nature, sin, disease, demons, Satan, and ultimately death.
 - b) The kingdom of God is a kingdom where the king serves his subjects and even dies to secure their eternal freedom.
 - c) The kingdom of God is one where the "poor in spirit," those utterly and totally dependent on the king, are the heirs of all the kingdom's riches.
 - 5) The kingdom of God is found anywhere that God's perfect will is done. Jesus taught us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom as he prayed to his Father, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10).
 - a) The kingdom of heaven comes upon true disciples wherever and whenever they acknowledge their identity and security are found in God alone.
 - b) Ultimately, the kingdom of God is the reign/rule of God in the hearts of his people whether that is in the present on earth or in the eternity of heaven.
4. What is our response to the kingdom of God as it comes near to us?
- a. "Repent . . ." (Gk., *metanoete* – P,A,Imptv – lit. "keep on repenting")
 - 1) This was the same message proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner in Mk 1:4.
 - 2) Repentance means "a change of mind/heart that results in a change in behavior."
 - 3) It is a change of mind about who is the king; about personal sin; and about the living of life.
 - 4) The baptism of John was an act showing true repentance that resulted in changed actions in life.
 - b. ". . . and believe (Gk., *pisteuete* – P,A,Imptv – lit. "keep on believing") in the good news."
 - 1) Repentance is not enough. Faith in the king is also required. We must turn from sin to the Savior.
 - 2) Faith is a big topic in Mark as in the other gospels. Belief is commanded (Mk 1:15, 5:36; 11:22,24); unbelief rebuked (Mk 4:40; 6:6; 9:19); and faith commended (Mk 2:5; 5:34; 9:23; 10:52; 11:23).
 - c. We must live in an on-going state of repentance and faith. The King has arrived and demands a change in our allegiance as we follow him as members of the kingdom of God day-by-day.
 - d. "Repent and believe" is the central message of the New Testament. It is the final altar call of God before the end!
 - 1) What do Jesus' words in Mk 1:14-15 mean to you as a member of the kingdom of God today?
 - 2) What response will you make to the call of the King in your life today? Repent and believe the good news.