

Reflection Guide

Mark 1:14-15

Big Idea: Jesus brings the news of God's coming Kingdom and the proclamation that He is King. This Kingdom has been anticipated and expected by God's people for ages and its fulfillment will look entirely different than their expectations. The proclamation that Jesus speaks is no mere suggestion. It isn't simply good advice, and the response to this proclamation is not one of resolve or effort in order to earn this kingdom, its one of repentance and faith.

[14] Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

To understand the magnitude of Jesus' message and ministry you have to get a sense of the people's anticipation and Jesus's authority.

1) Anticipation

Time has been leading and building to something being fulfilled since the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lived, thrived, and delighted under the gracious rule of God. God was with them and spoke to them. God led them and ruled them by His gracious Word. Their relationship was one of trust, delight, dependence (creatures), and satisfaction. They were God's People in the Place that God had created for them, living under God's gracious rule. This truly was the Kingdom of God. This is what all humanity was created for and we're all hardwired for this. And this is what makes the serpent's tempting of Adam and Eve so devastating. The serpent whispered innuendo and lies to cast doubt over the Goodness and Authority of God's Word, and then he denied the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God's Word. Adam and Eve believed the lies and rejected God's rule over them and the authority and trustworthiness of God's Word and sought to rule themselves.

Because of this, The Kingdom of God, God's people living in God's place ruled and satisfied in God's Good Word was shattered. Common Grace in the continuing of existence

God's Covenant with Abram

Then, in Genesis 12, we read of a covenant that God made with a man named Abram. God promised Abram descendants...a place to dwell...a renewed relationship with God. God Promised to make a People, to live in His Place, under His Good rule. Through His covenant with Abram, God was promising to restore the Kingdom that sin had torn apart

Kings and Prophets

There were shades of this restoration when David and Solomon were on the throne...but just shades. They were not perfect Kings because they were sinful men. Through the prophets God continued to build the anticipation for the renewal of His Kingdom describing it as a:

- time of righteousness (Isaiah 11:4-5),
- and people would live in peace (Isaiah 2:2-4).
- It would be a time of the fullness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-30)
- the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah realized (Jeremiah 31: 31-34, 32:38- 40).
- Sin and sickness would be done away with (Zechariah 13:1).
- Even the material creation would feel the joyful effects of this new age (Isaiah 11:6-9).

But as Israel looked around, what they saw were cycles of religious corruption, falling away from faith in God, and repeated occupations and captivities. When would these promises of God come? When would God restore His Kingdom. The anticipation continued to build...

**Are you anticipating something other than the continued experience of and increase of the Kingdom of God? Why does this seem strange?
(the whole OT was looking for our day and we are looking for something else)**

In what circumstances or situations are you to doubting the authority of God's Word?

[14] Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand..."

The Old Testament helps us to catch the drama of what Mark is describing and to feel the anticipation for this day. But by now, Israel's expectation and God's plans were different. Israel had begun to believe that the renewal of God's Kingdom would be an ethnocentric or political process.

1. Ethnocentric - We'll see the nature of the contempt that Israel had for people of different ethnicities. Samaritans, Phoenicians, and Romans. Rather than understand their identity as God's Chosen People meant to be a blessing to the nations, they had grown to despise the nations and they expected the renewal of God's kingdom to be a renewal of their ethnic superiority.

Jesus is going to crush this. You'll see why so many wanted Jesus dead. In Mark chapter 7 Jesus will heal a Syrophenician's daughter and say "*I've never seen such faith in all of Israel.*" and attack and crush the ethnocentric view of the Gospel. This is huge for us because as the Gospel is proclaimed to the nations, every culture gets to bring their cultural experience into the celebration of who God is. But the reality is this, as a dominant white culture has taken the Gospel to the nations we have taken our culture with us and in a sense, given our cultural expression the same weight as the Gospel.

Rather than every culture bringing something beautiful to the expression and celebration of God. We'll be challenged over and over again in this study to be reminded that the Gospel is older than the United States.

2. Political Movement - Israel wanted this badly. They wanted God's King to overthrow the Roman rule and establish Israel and rule through God's Law. You'll see time and time again the people will try to press Jesus into being this kind of King.

D.A. Carson - "what proved to be the hardest lesson for the disciples of Jesus to learn, was that the reign of God was not to be a cataclysmic external triumph in the here and now by an earthly Messiah, but a peaceful rule over the hearts of those who responded to the message."

The Kingdom of God was not going to be what Israel expected, but it will be the very thing that every single one of us longs for and needs.

**Who have you limited God's Kingdom to? (cultually, ethnically, socially)
How has this impacted who you interact with the people you encounter everyday? (neighbors, friends, co-workers) Do you really believe that this kingdom is for them?**

How have you limited the Kingdom to those who hold particular political ideologies, moral codes?

**What have you turned Jesus into?
(Race-leader, Democrat, Republican, Vegan, Hipster, Revolutionary)**

2) Authority

In addition to Anticipation, we see another word that could describe this passage: **Authority**
A Kingdom presupposes a King and the central issue in establishing a King is establishing His authority

- What's a king without authority?

Grame Goldsworthy, *"we may best understand the concept of the kingdom in terms of a the relationship between a ruler and his people...(It) pictures the rule and the reign and the dominion and the authority of God. Wherever His rule and reign is acknowledged and submitted to, there we see a picture of the Kingdom. See it all over the Gospel accounts.*

The Authority of Jesus in Mark Chapter 1

Authority Over Men 1:16-20 Rabbi's normally waited for people to follow them but here Jesus issues sovereign commands.

Authority To Teach 1:21-22 Jesus is no ordinary teacher he is not like the scribes. In fact his teaching is so extraordinary that the people 'were astonished' (v.22).

Authority Over Demons 1:23-28 They have controlled the man, Jesus now controls them.

Authority Over Sickness 1:29-31

Mark wants us to see that Jesus has authority in all areas of life in God's world. He is Lord of mankind with astonishing authority to teach. He has come to reverse the effects of the Fall as he silences evil spirits and heals sickness.

- JESUS HAS AUTHORITY TO CLEANSE (1:40-45)
- JESUS HAS AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE (2:1-12)
- THE KINGDOM IS FOR SINNERS. (2:13-17)

What in your life do you functionally believe has more authority than Jesus?

How do you think you have more authority than Jesus?

(control over your past/present/future; atoning for your own sin; your ability to change people)

The Kingdom of God was going to be of those with dark histories and current battles. We'll see in the story, religious people will want Jesus dead for this. The Kingdom is at hand because King is at hand. We're going to see this play out over and over...the authority of the King and the reality of life in the Kingdom.

But Jesus says something else here that we need to listen to.

The only way into this New Reality that is being established is through Repentance and Faith.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus declares that the way to life in this Kingdom is through:

- repentance - From now on life has to be lived in obedience to the king (so repent)
- faith - life has to be lived in commitment to the King (so believe).

The way to relate to this king and kingdom is not through making yourself worthy or accomplishing great deeds but through admitting your sin (repentance) and believing in the king. Right there we see the difference between Christianity and all other religions, or no religion, because the essence of other religions is advice. Other religions are basically advice; Christianity is basically gospel. Other religions basically say, "This is what you have to do, this is what you must accomplish, this is how you have to live, in order to be saved." The gospel is basically, "This is what has been done in history. This is what has been accomplished. This is the life Jesus lived and died for you, that you may be saved," and therefore, Christianity is completely different. The gospel call is a call of grace.

What are some things you've been trying to do to enter to the Kingdom?

This is why Jesus Called this Good News, Not inspirational teaching.

When you hear some great presentation of advice on how you ought to live, it might inspire you, but it's not a gospel; it weighs you down. The gospel is not, "This is how I have to live."

The gospel is God accepts you not on the basis of your past, but the basis of Christ's past; not on the basis of what you have done, what you have performed, but what he has accomplished in history for you. That makes it absolutely different. That makes it Good News.

The issue that we have to be honest with is "who is on the throne" in our life?

For Jesus to be King means:

- Obedience: "Am I willing to obey whatever God says about this life-area?"
- Acceptance: "Am I willing to thank God for whatever happens in this area?"
- Reliance: "Is there something instead of God I am relying on for self-worth?"
- Expectation: "Are there problems or limitations in my life I think are too big for God to remove?"

What areas of your life are contrary to Jesus declared will?

If you ever say, "*I'll obey Christ if...*" then you are still on the throne of your life, determining when and whether you will take a course of action.

What are the "if's in your life?