

## INTO GALILEE (Mk. 1:14-20)

Mk. 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. <sup>16</sup> Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. <sup>18</sup> And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. <sup>19</sup> And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. <sup>20</sup> And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Building upon what he has already recorded in the opening verses of the Gospel, Mark now begins to present Christ's ministry. The Gospel writer is telling us why Jesus left Judea and went northwards to Galilee. It was during the period when Herod had arrested and jailed John the Baptist. These were volatile times for preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Such a message was construed by some to be dangerous because it had the potential to incite a rebellion or revolution. It spoke of a coming Messiah, a King-like figure. There were many in Jewish society looking for someone to lead them out from under the yoke of foreign occupation. In the second century BC the Maccabees very famously led a revolt against a vile and wicked foreign ruler called Antiochus Epiphanes. In more recent times, there had also been a number of contenders for the title of Messiah. This was what Gamaliel was alluding to as he reminded the Sanhedrin, Acts 5:34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; <sup>35</sup> And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. <sup>36</sup> For before these days rose up Theudas [*God-given*'], boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. <sup>37</sup> After this man rose up Judas [*He shall be praised*'] of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, [even] as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

Our Lord's message, however, came from a different direction because it was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. He didn't come to stir up any potential political insurgency, but He came to establish a Kingdom to reign over His people, to God's glory. And the only way to enter God's Kingdom was by believing God's Good News and being born again, Jn. 3:3 Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That, very basically, was the message Jesus preached. ... The Gospel of the Kingdom of God, therefore, is the Gospel of God, and the very essence of the Gospel is Jesus Christ. He is what it is all about. There is only one Gospel and it is centred upon the work of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who died for us on the cross, according to the eternal plan of His Father. It is also the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

More than any other, then, the greatest and the most authoritative Gospel preacher of all time was the Lord Jesus. When He preached the Gospel He preached it in all its glory. He pointed to His Father's love for this world in that His Father sent His Son to be the Lamb to die for the sins of His people. ... When He preached the Gospel His enemies in Hell, - the devil and his angels, - shuddered and trembled ... And when Jesus preached the Gospel lost souls were brought from out of their darkness into His wonderful light.

He preached that people should repent and believe. He preached that repentance, on its own, is not enough to save us ... Yes, repentance results in the sinner turning from their sin but, in addition, the sinner must actively believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and trust in His promise of salvation.

And so this is what Mark is emphasising to his readers. The Gospel writer is faithfully establishing the record of the good news of King Jesus ... how He established the Kingdom, and how it is to be maintained. Here is the authority of Christ ... *He* has done the work! It doesn't need to be added to, amended, or updated ... *He* has done the work. *He* is the Master, we are the disciples!

What we are saying, though, is not immediately obvious to some. There are some who believe the Church is here to establish a good lifestyle for the world. They involve themselves in schemes and projects that sometimes are very honourable, but are not what Christ has called His Church to do. Through His disciples He has made clear the work we have for Him to do, [Mt. 28:19](#) *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*<sup>2</sup> <sup>20</sup> *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...* That is our remit! It's about telling a lost world of a Saviour Who died to set them free from sin.

It is about keeping the proclamation of the Gospel in the centre of our work. If it was about feeding the poor ... Jesus would have spent all His time producing bread and fish for the multitudes. If it had been all about healing the blind, the lame, the dumb ... He would have set up a hospital. If Jesus came to confront governments and powerful businesses, we would have Him lobbying King Herod and addressing Pontius Pilate, and the Sanhedrin ... We would have seen Him standing in the pulpit of the temple and preaching a 'gospel' of men? ... But that was not why He came ... He came for an even greater purpose for with all the authority of the Godhead, He proclaimed, [Jn. 6:38](#) *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

Yes, He fed the five thousand, and He helped the poor ... but the purpose for which Jesus Christ entered this world was to bring the Good News of the Gospel of Saving Grace. That Gospel is the foundation of His Kingdom! No matter how many kinds of people we have from all manner of backgrounds with various conditions and hardships ... there is no social resolution that can deal with the source of their problems. Jesus Christ is the only answer to the world's needs! ... And Jesus Christ left Heaven's glory to come to this earth to be the Saviour of men and women, boys and girls ... that in Him they might have life, and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10). That is the only remit we have for spreading the Gospel which has been passed on to us!

Where did the evils of earth begin? How did they start? They began because of man's sin ... and it is man's sin that continues to maintain these evils. And only until man's sin is confronted and dealt with by the Gospel of Christ's glorious Kingdom will it ultimately be defeated. Ezekiel prophesied, 34:23 I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, [*even*] my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken [*it*]. <sup>25</sup> And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. <sup>26</sup> And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. <sup>27</sup> And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I [*am*] the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. <sup>28</sup> And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make [*them*] afraid. <sup>29</sup> And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. ... This is a description of when Christ comes to reign. That is His message! It is not a message of this world, but it *is* a message *for* this world.

And what kind of strategy did Jesus use to achieve what He had come to do? He used no other strategy than the preaching of the Word of God. It was the same strategy of the prophets before Him, *Thus saith the Lord* ... It was the strategy used by Paul and the apostles. It has served the purposes of God from the beginning of time ... throughout every era and dispensation ... and there is no reason for God's people to abandon it today! It continues to be the means whereby God's people send forth the Gospel, through God's Word. God has blessed the preaching of His Word more than any other means men in their conceited wisdom have tried to emulate.

In just the same way exact details were given for the construction of the tabernacle and the temple, God gives clear commands as to how the Gospel is to be disseminated for sinners to be saved and saints to be confirmed and strengthened in their faith ... and we have it here very clearly set before us in Mk. 1:14, *Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.* ... We are told to follow His example ... *there is His example!*

He did not ‘fancify’ it, nor dangle it in front of their eyes as the most alluring and enticing message they had ever heard ... because it is not ... there is nothing attractive about Jesus dying for sinners on the cross. Neither did He give the people He spoke to what He thought they wanted to hear. Instead, He preached a clear message concerning their need to be made right with God, v.15 *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* ... To replace the method Christ presents for evangelism is to contradict Him. Ah, but we live in the year 2014, when people’s minds are more advanced and you need to change the emphasis of the Gospel ... Not at all! No, you don’t! ... In fact, I believe that is where we have gone wrong. Many have changed the Gospel so much in order to accommodate society that what they have changed it into is no different from anything else the world has, and the world sees no need for it. ...

I want to ask you something ... Is this Gospel we are trusting in for eternity precious to *you*? Is it the only Gospel that saves men and women from the endless horrors and sufferings of eternity? This Gospel that Jesus preached, - *repent ye, and believe the gospel,* - is the only means by which your loved ones can escape Hell ... do you believe that? Have you told them lately? ... I don’t mean you ‘ram it down their throats’, but when the Lord gives you the opportunity, do you take it? ... This is the only Gospel that saves!

People’s minds are as confused about religion and God today as they have ever been ... perhaps more than at any other time in the history of our nation. God is being challenged in the high places of government and of learning. He is even being challenged in the churches and in the cathedrals! Once again this week we have seen the national Church pandering to the abomination of homosexuality ... They are planning on placing into pulpits men and women who practice this God-condemned abnormality to take charge over the spiritual welfare of congregations up and down the land. ... No wonder there is such confusion! ... I cannot see how they will escape God’s condemnation, and neither can I understand how evangelicals can remain among them!

... We don't need to chase after wicked, or superficial, or contrived forms of spirituality to court the minds of the ungodly to believe ... We cannot cause one single anxious thought, - *that* is the work only the Holy Spirit is powerful enough to do ... but it is the will of God for His people to continue in the Lord's strategy by the [preaching \[of\] the gospel of the kingdom of God](#).

The Kingdom has been established, by no less than Jesus Himself! It will never recede or diminish. In fact, the truly born-again Church of the Lord Jesus Christ *worldwide* is stronger and larger today than at any time since its inauguration. Therefore, the power of Christ's Kingdom is mightier than all the powers of Satan's kingdom. And the means by which the Kingdom of Christ is being advanced has not changed any from the means by which the Lord instituted it, which is the [preaching \[of\] the gospel of the kingdom of God](#).

God had been waiting thirty years for this Gospel to be presented through His Son, for that was the age the Lord Jesus began [preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God](#). ... And the first obstacle He had to conquer was the most serious adversary He would have to face. From the outset of His ministry, He had to ensure He was able to crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). If He was to establish His Kingdom, whilst He was here He had to destroy the works of the devil. There cannot be two masters (Mt. 6:24).

Does Satan rule this world? Yes, he does ... and his authority seems to be increasing all the time. Whether we like to accept it or not, he is presently the major influence on the ideals, opinions, goals, views and aspirations of the majority of people. Some would say he is bound ... is he? Surely he directs the world's philosophies and religions that have sprung from his lies and deceit! He is wallowing in the deepening confusion he has perpetuated. Paul called him the [prince of the power of the air](#) (Eph. 2:2), and John described him as the [prince of this world](#) (Jn. 12:31). These titles signify Satan's regime.

*However*, that is *not* to say he can do whatever he likes ... for he cannot because *God is still sovereign* ... and He is all-sovereign. The power the devil has is merely loaned to him, - it is temporary, it is limited, it is transitory, - for he has been given his power in order to fulfil the greater purposes of God. One of the clearest examples of this refers to a future individual that will strut the world's stage, and notice how the Scriptures tell us about him, [Rev. 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.](#) <sup>2</sup> [And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as](#)

[the feet] of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. <sup>3</sup> And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who [is] like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? <sup>5</sup> And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty [and] two months. <sup>6</sup> And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

... it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him ... It is the same truth Satan articulated before God in relation to Job, 1:9 Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? <sup>10</sup> Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. <sup>12</sup> And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath [is] in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. ... Satan has limits ... God places restrictions on him ... and even the devil knows that he is only allowed to work within the constraints God has set upon him! So when Scripture indicates Satan is ‘the god of this world’, it is not saying he has ultimate authority but it is conveying the truth that he is presently being allowed to rule within the confines of God’s sovereign will and plan ... *and to God’s glory.*

That is why we are not despondent in this spiritual decline that is descending around us. ... When the disciples wanted to know the signs of the return of the Saviour and the end of the world, Jesus warned them to take great care they wouldn’t be deceived for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (Mt. 24:5). He went on to give a number of indications concerning His return, one of which was that because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (v.12). Yes, it might seem as if the devil is having it all his own way ... but if you read and study and believe God’s Word, it is only being ‘loaned to him’ for God is still in control!

And because we know God is still in control, we do not have to change the methods of proclaiming this Gospel that He has set out in His Word. The Gospel Christ proclaimed needs no change or nothing of man’s adaptations to succeed for the law of the Lord [the Gospel] is perfect, converting the soul: the

testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple (Ps. 19:7). This Gospel of Jesus Christ, - the Gospel He preached, and the Gospel the apostles preached, - is the Gospel that is continuing to save men and women, boys and girls around our world today ... *despite the devil!* ... He cannot stop it!

And so Jesus came [preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God](#). And as His work developed, the means by which He would make known the Gospel to sinners was *through* sinners. He did not draft in a legion of angels ... He called sinners. He was walking along the shores of Galilee when he saw two fishermen with their nets. They were not just *any* fishermen because these two men were chosen in eternity, - in God's sovereign and eternally-electing grace, - to become fishers of men. They were called Simon and Andrew. This was God's plan!

Now, He already knew them because according to Jn. 1:35-42 they had come to the River Jordan to the baptisms of John. They had met Jesus there, and John the Baptist had told them Jesus was the Lamb of God. They had spent time with Jesus, and they *believed* in Him. They knew He was the Messiah ... and so He travels all the way northwards, - months later, - to find them.

They were casting a net into the sea. The net could have been as much as twenty feet in diameter. Around the perimeter of the net there were weights ... and the fishermen were accurate in throwing the net out on to the area of the sea they wanted to fish. Then, when the fish would swim into the net the fishermen would hear a certain sound the net would make. And as the weights took the net down to the bottom, there was a rope along the perimeter ... and the fishermen would dive to the bottom of the water, get the rope, pull the rope tight, and drag the fish to the shore. ... That was the way it was done, and they would have been doing this since they were children ... and if Jesus had not intervened that day, they would have been doing it for the rest of their lives. ... And something else, fish was the staple diet, and these fishermen had a lucrative business for they would have sent their catches across that whole region. They weren't men idly sitting on the shore casting a line in every now and again, - this was their livelihood ... and they would have been very accomplished at it.

And so, on this particular day, Jesus said to them, [v.17 Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men](#). Incidentally, - but actually it's quite important, - they would have recognised Jesus as a rabbi ... but rabbis never called anyone to follow them. ...

Rabbis told people to follow God, and the Law ... but Jesus was unique in calling these fishermen to follow *Him*. ... This is the end of your fishing-for-fish life ... Your fishing-for-men life is about to begin. ... It sounds strange to us, but it was language they understood.

Leave what you were before, and follow me. Here, Jesus established the means by which His Kingdom would advance. From then on, He would use transformed sinners whom He would call to fulfil His Kingdom purposes. ... And what a power in that calling there must have been for a strong-minded and strong-willed man like Peter to immediately abandon his nets and follow Jesus. Peter had a wife and a home to maintain ... and he could argue ... but he and his brother followed Jesus, at the Saviour's command (v.18).

Just a little further along the beach were two more brothers, James and John, and they were mending their nets (v.19), - they were doing what you did when you weren't fishing. These would not have been easy men either, - they were nicknamed "the sons of thunder" (3:17). Together, they were in business with their father Zebedee, Peter and Andrew. Immediately, - and you will notice the *two* times 'straightway' is mentioned, - the very moment Christ called them they obeyed. There is the power of the irresistible call of God! ... *Jn. 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.* ... When the Lord calls you, - whether it is to salvation or to service, - there is no place else you can be but by His side ... and that was what happened here.

So far, we have seen the power of Christ over Satan, over sin, and over sinners. When the Lord saves you, He calls you and you enter His service. He claims you as a sinner saved by grace to be His servant. To serve Him is what He expects of you. No matter what other responsibilities you have, serving Christ is your priority! Whatever other doors He opens for you in your career, or in your family, or in your hobbies ... serving Christ is why you are on this earth, - that is what He has saved you to do for Him! That is how the Kingdom advances. The work has been passed from generation to generation ... that is how it continues ... it is our turn now ... *Is it continuing with you?!* ... It is the Lord's will for His people until He comes again, or until He calls you home! ... *v. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left ... and went after him.* ... May that also be the account God keeps concerning you and me! Amen.