

Our Lord's Galilean Ministry and the Calling of His Disciples

Mark 1:14-20

Mark 1:14-20 – *“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

¹⁶ And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

¹⁹ When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. ²⁰ And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”

Background Notes

Mark 1:1-13 is the record of the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism and temptations of our Lord. Between verses 13 and 14 there's a time gap of about one year. During that year, the Lord spent a lot of time in the Jerusalem area. This same time period is covered in John chapters 1-4. During this year, between verses 13 and 14, John the Baptist was imprisoned - more about that in Mark 6.

Our Lord's great Galilean ministry begins with verse 14. The time period for the Galilean ministry is one year and nine months, and it's covered from Mark 1:14 to the end of Mark 9.

In Mark 1:16-18 we have the call of the four fishermen—Andrew, Simon (Peter), James and John. Now don't get the idea that these four men didn't know about Jesus Christ and had never seen Him before, or that the Lord was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and just called to them right out of the blue! No, they had already met the Lord and had sat under his ministry - in fact, John 1 says that Peter and Andrew were already disciples. And most likely James and John were already disciples as well, because His disciples were present with the Lord when He changed the water into wine (John 2), and when He met the Samaritan woman (John 4). These events (John chapters 1-4) had already taken place before Mark 1:16, so Peter, Andrews, James and John were not strangers to Jesus. The event in Mark 1:16-18 does not describe the time when these men became disciples, but rather it describes their call to full-time service.

Notice (v20) that when James and John left their father in the fishing business, they didn't leave him stranded and without help. He had hired servants to help him with the business. This may be an indication that the family had a very good business and they were quite well off.

Doctrinal Points

1. God keeps a perfect timetable.

Verse 15: *“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”* In the English language we only have one word for time, but in the Greek language there are two words: there’s *chronos* and *chiros*. *Chronos* has to do with the passing of time, or the duration of time, or the quantity of time. *Chiros* has to do with a definite time or special time or quality of time. If I were to say in Greek, “The time is 9pm,” I would use *chronos*. If I were to say in Greek, “The time has arrived; it’s your birthday!” or “It’s New Year’s Day,” or “It’s Bible Study time,” I would use the word *chiros*. In verse 15, *chiros* is the word for time that is used: *“The time is fulfilled”*—that is, according to God’s time table, the time for the coming of the King and the announcement of the kingdom had arrived. As Galatians 4:4 says, *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son....”*

In non-Christian worldviews - that is to say, in **unbiblical** worldviews - time is viewed as endless or cyclic. The biblical view is different. The biblical view is that God created time; it had a beginning and will have an end. Time has a goal, and along the way there are special and significant times for specific and special events. In other words, **God has a timetable, a perfect timetable**. And not only that, He keeps that timetable perfectly! This is a great truth to know and appreciate when it seems like everything is up for grabs in your life, or when the world scene is chaotic and seems to be out of control. No, God is in control and He keeps a perfect timetable. Here we have **the major event** on God’s timetable—the coming of the King and the announcement of the kingdom of God at hand!

2. The kingdom of God has come and is coming.

Notice again verse 15: *“...the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”* The message of John the Baptist was, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* John the Baptist had been imprisoned, but the Lord was continuing that theme: *“The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”* Believe the “good news”—the gospel—the good news that the King and his kingdom had arrived.

However, as you know, the King was rejected. The Jews rejected their Messiah. Now comes the question: Does that mean that the kingdom of God never arrived? It was announced as “at hand,” but does the fact that the King was rejected mean that the Kingdom of God never arrived? Answer: The kingdom of God **did** come -- but it is also **yet** to come! And that’s our doctrinal point: **The kingdom of God has come and is coming**.

That sounds like double talk, doesn’t it? But it really isn’t, because what we’re saying here is that the kingdom of God **has come** in its spiritual form, but it has not yet come in its physical, earthly form. That arrival has been postponed until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Anyone who trusts in Jesus Christ now as personal Savior enters the kingdom of God.

Christ is our King and God rules in our hearts and lives. But there's more to come! The kingdom **is coming**. When Jesus Christ comes again, He'll set up His earthly kingdom that will last for a thousand years (Revelation 20)—the millennial kingdom of Christ. The Lord will return and set up this earthly kingdom, and this will set the stage for the Eternal State.

In the “parable of the pounds” (or *minas*) in Luke 19, we clearly see that the kingdom of God has not fully come yet. It has come in its spiritual form, but there's more to come. Luke 19:11-12, 15: “...he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return... He was made king, and returned home...” In this parable the Lord clearly showed, in parable form, that there is an aspect of the kingdom of God that is yet to come: **when the King returns**.

So the kingdom of God has come in its spiritual form, and as we accept Christ as our personal Savior and become Christians, we enter the kingdom of God. Christ rules! We have the rule of God in our hearts and in our lives—the spiritual form of the kingdom. But the kingdom is also yet to come! When the Lord returns, there will be that physical aspect to the kingdom of God. The earthly kingdom of Christ will be set up. So, **the kingdom of God has come and is coming**.

Practical Applications

1. The Lord calls ordinary people like you and me.

Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen. They were regular guys - ordinary people. And with a team of ordinary men like this, God changed the world! I Corinthians 1:26 – “*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.*” The Lord calls ordinary people like you and me.

Now, at times God does call some above-average people. Take the Apostle Paul, for example – a brilliant, well-trained scholar; one of the greatest human minds of all time. But usually the Lord calls ordinary, average people like you and me to do His work on the earth. So don't feel bad if you're feel like you're only “average” and “ordinary” in your abilities, or your brains, or your talent, or your looks! The Lord calls ordinary people like you and me. You're the kind of person God calls to serve Him in ways that can change the world.

Notice, by the way, that the Lord didn't choose lazy “loafers.” Peter, John, James, Andrew, were busy working when the Lord called them! They were ordinary people, but they weren't sitting-around-doing-nothing ordinary people! They were roll-up-your-sleeves-and-let's-work ordinary people! So if you're an ordinary person and you're willing to work, just start

serving the Lord in small ways. He may choose to have you work right where you are, or he may choose to call you to other spheres of service as you prove yourself faithful. But remember this: **God calls ordinary people like you and me.**

2. Let's be intelligent fishermen.

In verse 17 the Lord said, "*Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.*" We are to "catch" other people for Christ. And we are to be intelligent fishermen. Notice three points:

- a) The Lord didn't say, "*Make yourself fishers of men.*" No, He said, "*Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.*"
- b) As much as possible, we should use our common sense and go where the fish are located. We've got to start relating to people - they're the fish!
- c) As much as possible, we need to use the right bait for the right fish. The Christian literature you share with an unbelieving teenager will probably be different than the Christian literature you share with a retired couple who need Christ. **Different bait for different fish!** What you say to your non-Christian Jewish neighbor will be different than what you share with a good-works-oriented, professing Christian. The same gospel, but you're approaching it in a different way. Intelligent fishermen use different bait.

We need to pray for wisdom and discretion as we fish, and as much as possible let's **be intelligent fishermen.**