

Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

Proclaiming The Gospel Of God

January 22nd, 2017

Mark 1:14-15

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Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Mark 1:14; that’s on page 836 in your pew Bibles. Over the last couple of weeks we have looked at how Jesus is introduced in the Gospel of Mark. John the Baptist came first to prepare the way. He told people that the promise of God was about to break into the world. God was about to invade human history and turn it on its ear – and he said the best way to prepare for that was to repent of your sins, renounce your former allegiances and to let go of every thing you’ve ever believed about the world. Then Mark narrates for us the baptism of Jesus and he tells us that Jesus is the beloved Son of God! He is Israel reduced to one, he is the lamb that God provides to deal with the sin of the world. We see him uniquely filled with the Holy Spirit and going out in that power to confront our age-old enemy in the wilderness. Jesus goes out into the desert and he slaps the devil in the face and he says, “I’m here, its on and you’re done!” He initiates CONFLICT on a cosmic scale.

This is the one we’ve been waiting for! This is the Seed of the Woman who will defeat our enemy and bring us back to God – that was the sum and substance of Mark’s introduction of Jesus Christ and now finally after all that framing and set up – Jesus takes centre stage. In Mark 1:14-15 Jesus finally begins to speak. And this is what he says.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 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.” (Mark 1:14–15 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – THANKS BE TO GOD!

Now before we get into what Jesus actually said I want you to notice when and where he said it. These are not incidental details. Mark doesn’t waste words – I told you that already – Mark is by far the shortest and most direct of all the Gospels – so if Mark says something than it means something and he almost NEVER gives us time and geographical references but here HE DOES and so we are interested in what he has to say. He says:

Now after John was arrested (Mark 1:14 ESV)

There is a sense in which Jesus wanted to let John do his job before he began to do his job. John’s job, you remember was to get people ready for Jesus. He told everybody – the old world is about to fall and a new world, born of God, powered by the Spirit is about to begin. John was an apocalyptic preacher. He said –

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:10 ESV)

This world is OVER! And you better jump ship into the kingdom of God while you still have a chance! Repent and believe in the Gospel!

John knew that he had a job and then he needed to get out of the way. He says:

He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:30 ESV)

I need to do my thing and then I need to get out of the way. But John didn’t know that even THE WAY he got out of the WAY would point people to Jesus. The word that Mark uses to describe John’s imprisonment is actually better translated as “betrayed” or “delivered over” and Mark will go on to use that exact same word 10 times in his Gospel to describe the final fate of Jesus. He says for example in Mark 9:31:

“The Son of Man is going to be **delivered** into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” (Mark 9:31 ESV)

Same exact word! So Mark’s point in using it here in chapter 1 seems pretty obvious. He is saying that:

The Baptizer is the forerunner of Jesus not only in his message but also in his fate, which includes suffering and death.¹

Jesus began his ministry knowing exactly how it would end.

Mark goes on to say that after John was delivered over,

Jesus came into Galilee (Mark 1:14 ESV)

Well that’s interesting, for a couple of reasons. First of all when you compare Mark’s Gospel to John’s Gospel you notice that Mark has skipped some stuff – we’ll notice that again and again – I told you that Mark’s Gospel is brief, blunt and to the point – here we see that evidenced again. Mark skips the Judean prelude to Jesus’ public ministry – if you want to read about that you can find it in John 3:22-36 – but Mark skips it because Jesus was intentional about coming back from Judea into Galilee in order to hold a press conference as it were in order to announce the beginning of his public ministry. Here is why this is important – Mark makes it clear that Jesus WANTED to begin his ministry in Galilee – he was in Judea when John was arrested and he could have launched his ministry right then and there! You might even argue that he should have! Judea was the more important province – it was closer to Jerusalem the capital city – why then did Jesus LEAVE the spotlight of the nation in order to go back into the HINTERLAND to launch his public ministry – that is a good question.

Now remember I told you that the desert or the wilderness is an important theme in the Gospel. It represents unplugging. Breaking free of the consensus culture in order to discover again who God is, who we are and how God has saved us in Jesus Christ. You see God rarely shouts over the crowd. He is interested in those who are dissatisfied with the world as presently constituted. Do you remember where it was that God called Moses? Was it in Egypt? Was it in the belly of the

¹James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 45.

global super power? No. It was in the desert through a burning bush. God spoke in such a way as to attract a certain person. That is not an incidental detail in the original Exodus story – the Bible says:

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush (Exodus 3:2–4 ESV)

Do you see that? God revealed himself in such a way so as to attract a certain type of person. The Kingdom of God is veiled to a certain type of person. It is veiled to the person who LOVES THE WORLD THE WAY IT IS. It is veiled to those who are already in charge of the world the way it is. It is veiled to those who delight in its riches and wisdom. But it is very near to the poor in spirit. It is very near to the downtrodden and downcast. It is very near to those who mourn over sin and injustice. It is very near to children and to the weak and to the humble.

That is no accident – Jesus said it was the design and will of God. Jesus prayed to the Father and said:

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. (Matthew 11:25–26 ESV)

Listen to me friend if you love the world – if you think things are great and the world is WISE and the experts are right – then you are very far from the kingdom of God. But if you sense that things are not the way they should be – WE ARE NOT the way we should be, we are broken and lost and deceived then you are very near – even at the gates of the kingdom of God.

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:3–4 ESV)

The Gospel is preached OUTSIDE the gates of the culture.

Alright, the last thing I want you to see before we actually begin dealing with this sermon of Jesus is what Mark calls this sermon of Jesus. He says that what Jesus was preaching was:

the gospel of God (Mark 1:14 ESV)

You know its interesting, sometimes you wonder how Jesus could preach the Gospel before he died on the cross and rose again – because that is the centre of the Gospel. So how could Jesus preach the Gospel before he had done the Gospel things? Well the fact that he did – and that the Bible says he did – should remind us that the Gospel **BEGINS** with God. We talk about this all the time in our evangelism training – we talked about it this past Thursday night. The Gospel begins with God! The Gospel is the Good News of what **GOD HAS DONE** in Christ to secure our redemption! It is about God from start to finish!

Jesus therefore is preaching the invasion of God into human history in himself – that is the Gospel he is preaching! He is saying – in me God has come for you! That’s the Gospel! Now over the course of the next several chapters a lot of content will be added to that statement, but here we have the Gospel in a nutshell. The Gospel in a nutshell is the Good News that in Christ **GOD** has come for his people! Thanks be to God!

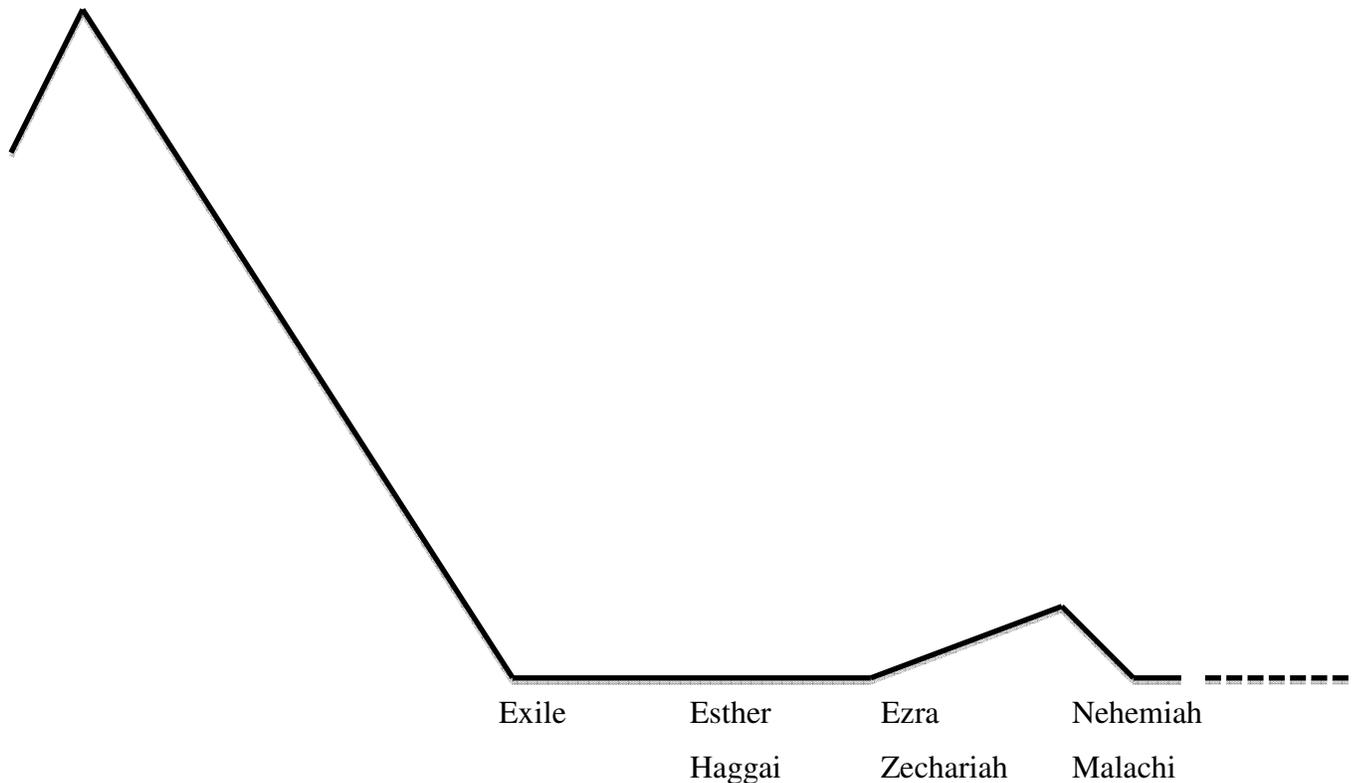
Alright, let’s get in to the actual sermon.

The Essential Message Of Jesus

Now keep in mind that this is a summary of what Jesus was preaching at this initial stage of his earthly ministry. Jesus went around Galilee preaching this message and he probably preached for an hour or two in every village that he visited – he certainly did not roll into town and preach a one sentence sermon – this is a summary, this is the heart and substance of what Jesus had to say. The first thing he said was that:

1. The time is fulfilled

That expression is kind of enigmatic – the time is fulfilled – what does that even mean? I think it means two things. It means first of all that the time of waiting is **OVER** – Jesus is **HERE!** We’ve talked now for several weeks about the waiting that preceded the coming of Jesus. We made good use of this chart:



Those dots represent WAITING – waiting for what? Waiting for the promises of God! God said he would come and change the game! He said he would come and cleanse our hearts (Ezekiel 36:25), he said he would pay for our sins (Isaiah 53:5) and fill us with the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27). That’s what people have been waiting for and now Jesus steps on the stage and he says: “The time is fulfilled. The waiting is over. I’m here.”

In Luke’s Gospel we get a little more detail. Jesus quotes Old Testament prophecies that speak about the promises of God and then Luke says:

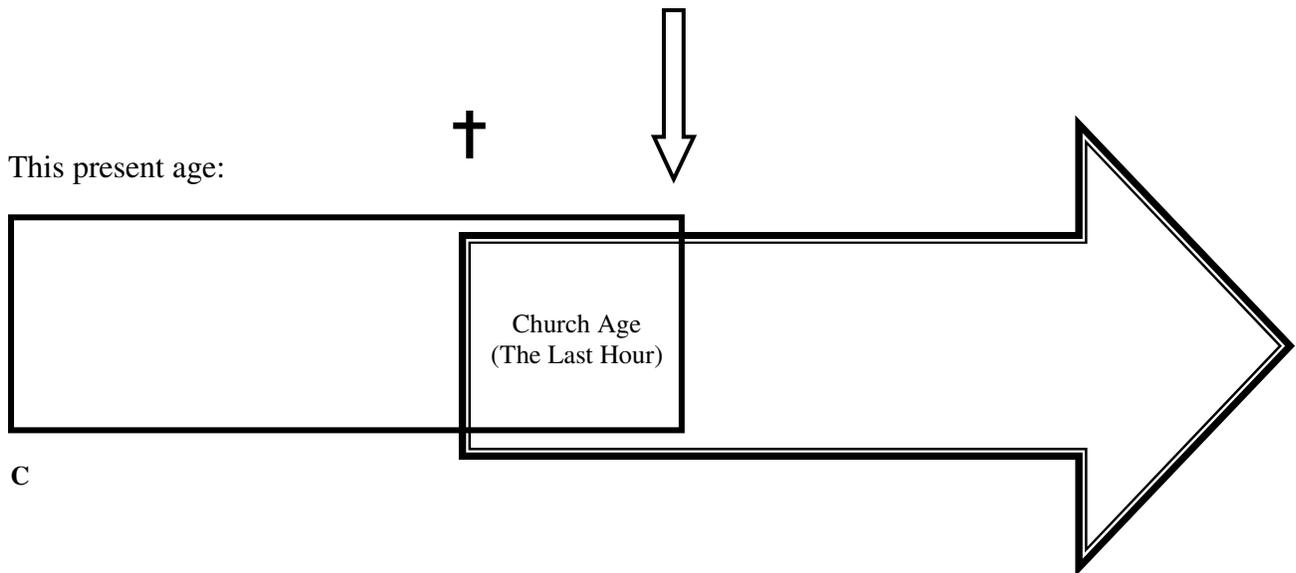
he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:20–21 ESV)

I am what you’ve been waiting for. I am all of the promises of God. That’s a bold statement and it was not always well received. When Jesus spoke that message in his home town of Nazareth in Galilee Luke says that they rose up and tried to throw him off a cliff – that’s a big statement to say that I am everything God promised to do for his people – but that’s what Jesus said. I am

what you've been waiting for – I am the beginning of a whole new world.

That's the other piece that seems to lie behind that rather enigmatic phrase. When you say that the time is fulfilled you are saying that the waiting is over – but you are also saying that the world is over. Jesus makes it very clear that with his coming the old world has passed away and a new world has now begun.

According to Jesus as soon as he came into the world we began living in the overlap of the ages. I think I've showed you this before, we talked about this in that series "X Marks The Spot" when we talked about how the kingdom of God is "now and not yet". That's what we mean by the overlap of the ages. Do you remember this chart?



I didn't invent this chart I stole it from a systematic theology book. What this chart is saying is that Jesus invaded this dying world in order to open a passage to an eternal world. What that means is right now we live in the overlap of the ages. When Jesus came the first time he opened the gate. He brought eternity into reality. Now we've got overlap but when he comes back the second time – the gate closes and the old reality is cast into the lake of fire and the new reality continues forever – that is the Biblical worldview. I know it feels like an episode of Star Trek but its not. What the Bible is saying is that in Jesus the eternal kingdom is SPATIALLY NEAR –

that's what that weird expression "the kingdom of God is at hand" means. That is not a temporal reference, meaning Jesus isn't saying that the end of time is SOON, rather he is saying that the eternal kingdom is NEAR. I'm not making that up, NT scholar James Edwards writes:

Mark employs a verb (Gk. *engizein*) that occurs frequently in the NT with reference to spatial rather than temporal nearness.²

So Jesus isn't saying that the apocalypse is coming soon he is saying that in him the eternal kingdom has come NEAR to all who believe. That's why Jesus says:

"The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17:20-21 ESV)

Its already here – not in its fullness but in its nearness. Right now because of Jesus we live in the overlap of the ages. We live on a world that is dying. Jesus didn't come to the earth to declare that the world is dying – the world has been dying since Genesis 3! God said that in the day you eat of it you will surely die and on the day that we ate of it the world began to die. That's why the Bible says that God guarded the way back to Eden with a flaming sword – in Genesis 3 we got kicked out of the kingdom of God because we sinned! On that day we began to die – this ship began to sink – Jesus didn't come to sink the ship Jesus came to get us off the ship. He stepped into this dying world to give us a way home.

That's why Jesus said:

I am the door. (John 10:9 ESV)

If you enter by me you can leave this dying world and be saved.

The time is fulfilled. What you've been waiting for is here. I am the rescue of God. I am the way home.

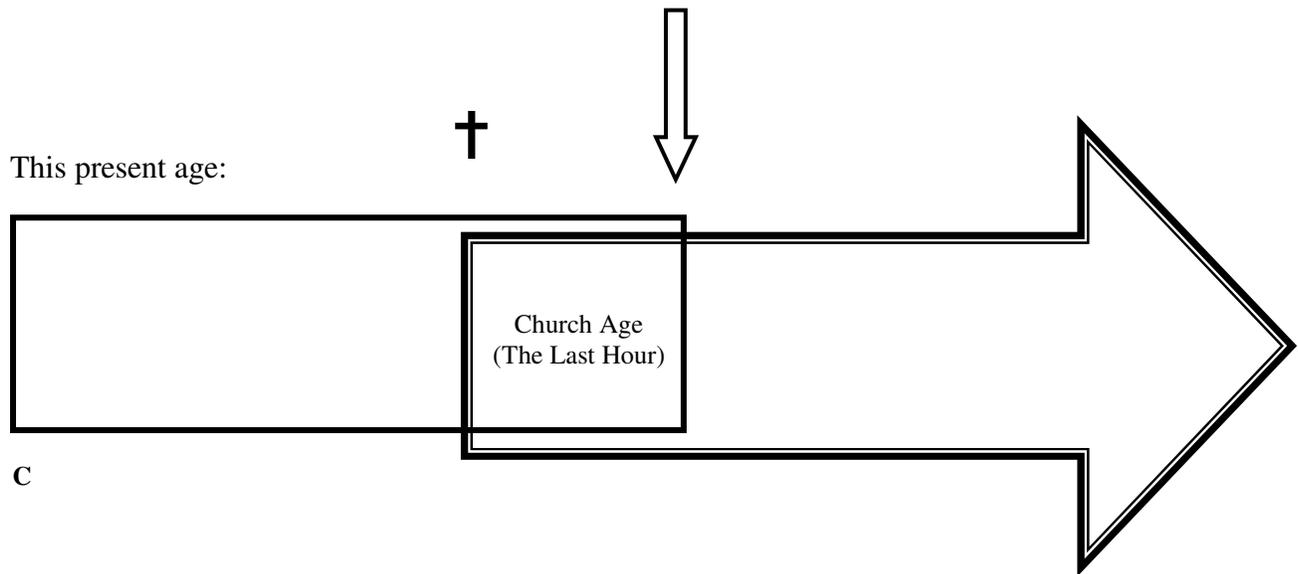
The second thing Jesus says is that:

²James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 46-47.

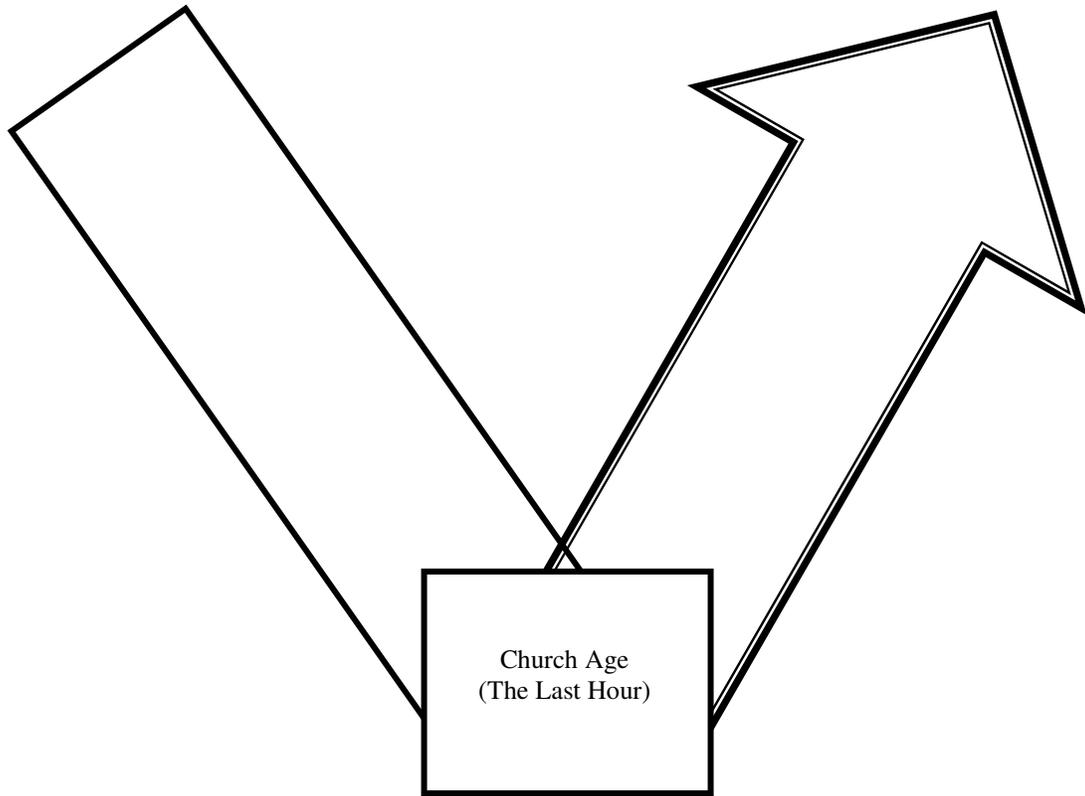
2. The kingdom of God is at hand

We've already talked about that expression "is at hand" – it doesn't mean is coming soon it means that it is here and presently available in a spatial sense – it is as close to you as Jesus. So what is the kingdom of God? Well obviously, based on the phrase, it means in some sense to come back under the reign of God as king. The word "kingdom" is a compound word that means "the domain of the king" – it means to be brought back under the benevolent rule of God.

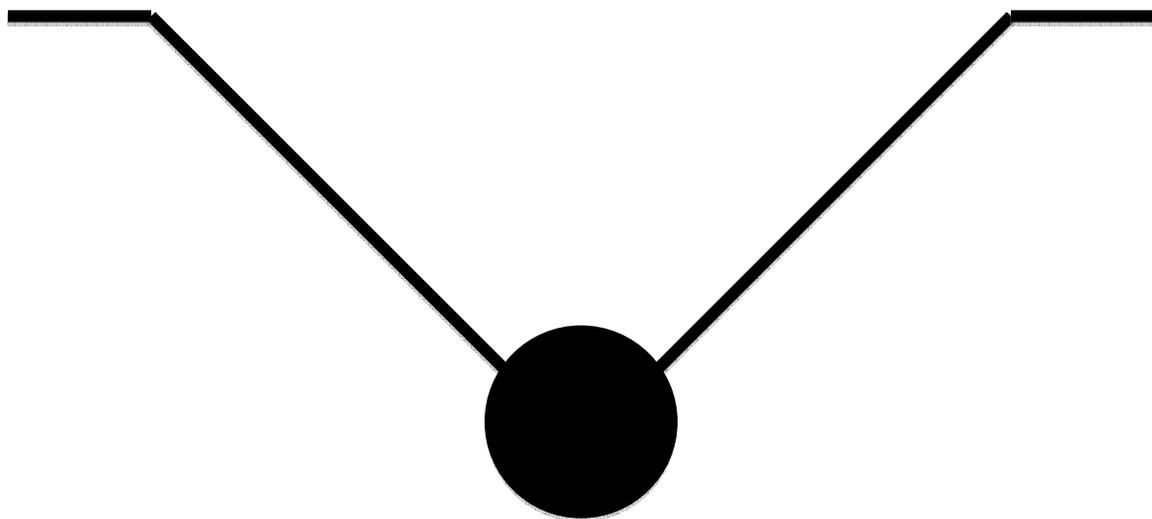
Let's go back to that chart I just showed you.



Well, really it should be shaped this way:



This world – this present age – is dying, it has been dying since Genesis 3. It’s a sinking ship! It is humanity in descent away from God and down into ruin. Well when you draw this chart that way – what does it look like? It looks this chart:



GRACE JUNCTION

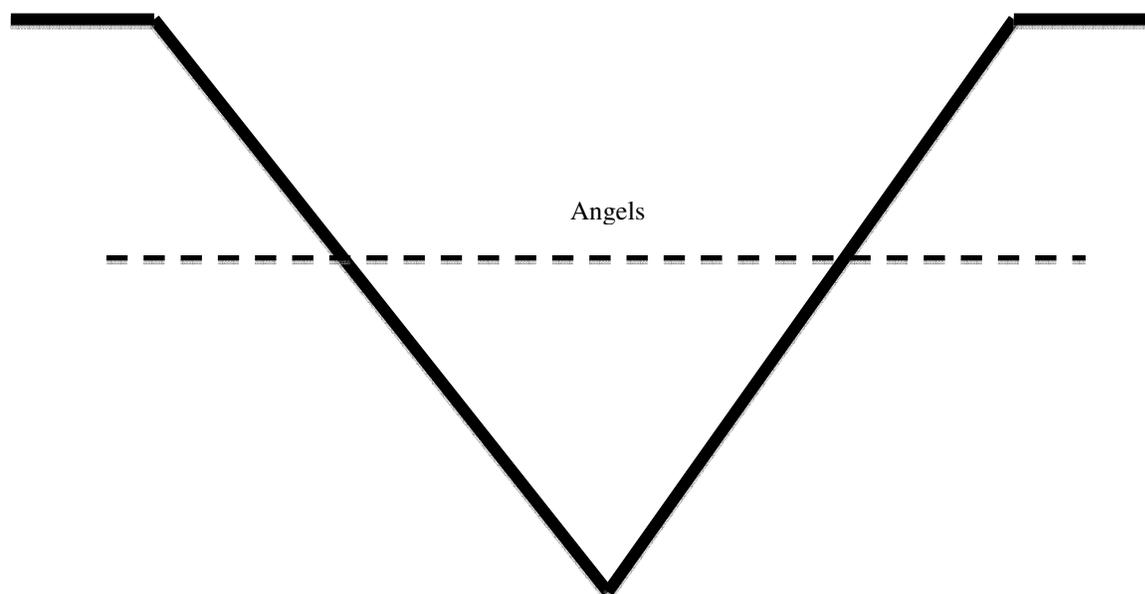
That's the chart we use to draw out the 5 G's of the Gospel – because that's what the kingdom of God means. The “kingdom of God” is just another way of talking about the Gospel! The story of the Bible begins with humanity under God and over everything else. But we were not content with that – we wanted to be like God – deciding right and wrong for ourselves – and so reaching up we fell down. But the Gospel is the message about how in Christ God came down to us! He joined us on our sinking ship in order to offer us a way home.

Now you don't have to take my word for that – that's how the mission of Jesus is described and interpreted in the Letter to the Hebrews. You've heard me say many times that we can't understand Jesus unless we read the anticipations of the Old Testament and the explications of the New Testament. The Apostles TOLD US WHAT THIS MEANT. In Hebrews 2 the Apostle quotes from Psalm 8 – which says:

You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, 8 putting everything in subjection under his feet.” (Hebrews 2:7-8 ESV)

The Apostle applies this Psalm to Jesus. He says – Jesus for a little while came down LOWER than the angels.

Now, let's go back to this chart:



In the beginning human beings were established under God and over everything else – over even the angels! But when we fell we fell beneath the angels – beneath one angel is particular – beneath the devil. And now humanity is born under his boot. But Hebrews says the mission of Jesus was a rescue mission. He came down – LOWER THAN THE ANGELS and this is what he came to do:

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might **taste death for everyone.**
10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in **bringing many sons to glory,** should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:9–10 ESV)

Jesus came down to die for us – he rode this train right into death and hell – and then because death could not hold him and the grave could not keep him – he ROSE AGAIN and by so doing he made a way home! By so doing he brings many sons to glory – where does this story end my friends?

With you back in glory – under God and over everything else – that’s why the Apostle said:

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:3 ESV)

When the Gospel is over – when the kingdom of God is fully consummated – you will be back where you were created and saved to be. Under God and over everything else – even the angels!

That’s what the Gospel is! That’s what it means to be brought back under the benevolent rule of God! The Gospel is about RESCUE, REDEMPTION, RESTORATION and REIGN. It is about Jesus coming down to defeat our enemy and to set us free. It is about Jesus through his Holy Spirit restoring us to our original nature and calling and then it is about Jesus sitting down and including us in his reign over all things – that is the Gospel – that is what Jesus went into Galilee to proclaim.

Now, how in the world do you respond to a message like that? Well thankfully, Jesus tells us. That’s the third thing he says in this sermon. He says:

3. Repent and believe in the gospel

To repent means to let go and turn away. Why would you cling to a world that is dying? Why would you love what is rotten and cursed? Is there beauty still in the world? Of course there is – it was made by God and he makes things well but it is a cut flower beauty. It is a beauty that has begun to die and fade. Let it go. Turn away from that – come out into the desert and see what God has done. There is a new world coming – it is here now and available to you in the person of Jesus Christ. So turn away – let it go and cling to Christ.

That's what that phrase "repent and believe" means. Repent is to turn away from, believe is to turn around to. That's GRACE JUNCTION! (display chart 5) To repent and believe means to change trains! Get out of the world, get off that train and cling to Christ! Take hold of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and he will lift you up out of your sins, out of yourself, out of this world and he will bring you back to God, back to LIFE and back to your original design and calling.

That is the Gospel of God – that is what Jesus came to do and preach and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.