

# It's Kingdom Time!

Galilean Ministry Part 1  
Mark 1:14-15 9/30/2017

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Summary: Jesus emerges from the conflict with Satan announcing the arrival of the kingdom (Jesus won!). Shockingly, John is handed over at that same time, signaling a different kind of kingdom than was expected. The arrival of the kingdom demands an immediate human response: repent and believe (those two can't be separated). Failure to do so means missing the kingdom. The most important method for bringing people to repentance and faith is preaching.

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**Mark 1:14 After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God. 15  
“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in the gospel!”**

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## Introduction: Jesus Won

You're traveling with a friend, walking north from Jerusalem and you see off in the distance this guy climbing up out of this steep canyon, scrambling up the side on all four's. The other side of that canyon is the desolation, and your friend says out loud the very thing you were thinking: *What was that guy doing out there?* From the looks of him, you figure he's been out there for some time, which makes you wonder how he even survived.

And not to sound prejudiced or anything, but you can tell he's not from Judea. He's a Jew, but he looks kind of Galilean – if you know what I mean. But you're not going to hold that against him. So you put out your hand and help him up onto the road, and you can feel the bones in his hand. He's frail and weak and looks to be on the brink of starvation. His clothes are filthy, *he's* filthy, sunburned – this guy's a wreck. And you just say it: “Man, you look like you've been to hell and back.” The Galilean gives you a wry smile and says, “You should see the other guy.”

Now, of course, none of that is in the Bible. I made it all up. I don't know who the first people were to see Jesus when he returned from his 40 days of fasting and battling Satan out in the devastation. Mark doesn't tell us anything about the moment of his return. He doesn't even tell us if Jesus won or lost. He just says Jesus went out there to be tested by Satan for 40 days. So how did he do? Did he pass the test? Did Jesus win or did Satan win?

Instead of just telling us, Mark lets Jesus tell us in v.14-15, which begin the body of the book of Mark. The first 13 verses were the introductory prologue, where Mark tells us the preliminaries – John the Baptist preparing the people, Jesus’ baptism, his coronation as the Messiah, and his testing in the desert by Satan. That’s all introduction; now we’re ready to get down to business and hear the story of Jesus’ ministry. And look how it starts – these are the first words we hear out of Jesus’ mouth in the book of Mark.

**Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said.**

What time?

**"The kingdom of God is near.**

The time of the kingdom! The time promised throughout the OT. The waiting is over. The decisive moment in history has arrived. All of history from the creation on has been marching forward inexorably right up to this climactic moment: *the kingdom has arrived!*

What kingdom? The great messianic kingdom promised in Psalm 2 where all the kings of the earth bow the knee to the Son of God. It’s the kingdom of Daniel 7 where the son of man is given authority, glory, and sovereign power and all peoples, nations and men of every language worship him and his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom one that will never be destroyed. It’s the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 where the Messiah crushes all the evil kingdoms and brings them to an end.

That’s the kingdom the people have been waiting for, and Jesus says, “It’s here! The time has arrived. The kingdom is here because I am here, and I am the messianic King.”

So if you’re wondering how the battle in the desert turned out, there you go. At the end of the 40 days, is it Satan claiming victory, and Jesus in the background hanging his head in shame? No, it’s Jesus who comes out of that combat in the devastation, and he comes out proclaiming great news of victory, and now he’s moving ahead with setting up his kingdom.

## **The Mystery of the Kingdom**

Now, in light of all that – in light of what Jesus says in v.15, v.14 is a strange, bizarre, head-scratching verse. Look what Mark says about when Jesus kicked off his Messianic reign:

**14 After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.**

Wait a minute, *what?* When did you say Jesus proclaimed the arrival of his glorious, dominating kingdom? Mark says, “Oh, it was right around the time John the Baptist got arrested.”<sup>1</sup> Do you see why I say that’s a bizarre, head-scratching verse? How is John getting arrested? Jesus was just crowned Messiah by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The voice spoke from heaven. He battles Satan in the desert and comes out proclaiming, “The time of waiting is over. It’s kingdom time!” And while he’s announcing that, they are slapping the cuffs on John the Baptist? If the Messiah is this awesome, dominant head of a great kingdom, how does his #1 guy get arrested by some gentile ruler? And not even by Caesar, but by this petty, local yahoo named Herod?

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<sup>1</sup> We learn in the book of John that Jesus carried out several months of ministry before John was arrested, so there was actually some overlap of John’s and Jesus’ ministries. (After Jesus’ 40 days in the desert, Andrew and another disciple hear John’s preaching and followed Jesus. Then Andrew brings his brother Peter. Then Jesus called Philip, who went and brought Nathaniel. Then Jesus takes those 5 to a wedding and performs his first miracle, changing water to wine. Then Jesus cleanses the Temple and performs some miracles, and he and the 5 disciples spend several months baptizing people in the Jordan while John is also baptizing. But then the Pharisees get wind of the fact that Jesus is gaining in popularity, which could cause a conflict with them that it wasn’t time for yet, and so Jesus decides it’s time to leave the Judea area, and go back home to Galilee.

But Mark wants to put the arrest of John in the same sentence with the arrival of the kingdom, so he just gives us general blocks of time: first John the Baptist, then Jesus. Peter (Mark’s source) presents it the same way in **Acts 10:37-38 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.**

Right off the bat Mark is signaling to us – the Messiah’s kingdom, initially, is not going to be what you expect. We already got some hints of that when the Holy Spirit came down as a dove instead of something more intimidating, like an eagle. And right after his coronation, instead of being seated on a throne in a palace, Jesus got sent out into the desert where he suffered. So we already had some clues, but now Mark really puts it right in our face by telling us that the debut of the great Messiah was right around the time his best man gets arrested by a petty local ruler.

And it’s not just a temporary situation either. John ends up dying in prison. And the wording is significant too. The NIV says John was *put in prison*, but literally it just says, he was *handed over*.<sup>2</sup> All the readers of Mark would think of one thing when they heard that term, *handed over*. That’s the word that was always used to describe the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. As we go through the book, we’re going to hear that word being used to describe what happened to Jesus 14 times. Just give you a few examples:

**14:10 Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to hand Jesus over to them.**

**15:1 the Sanhedrin bound Jesus and handed him over to Pilate.**

**15:10 it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.**

**15:15 Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.**

Judas handed him over, the Sanhedrin handed him over, the chief priests handed him over, Pilate handed him over - 14 times Mark uses this word *handed over* to describe what happened to Jesus. So by using that term for what happened to John, Mark is showing<sup>3</sup> us that John the Baptist was not only Jesus’ forerunner in proclamation, but he was also Jesus’ forerunner in persecution. God said, “Let me tell you about my coming Messiah – I’ll announce it through the mouth of John the Baptist. But I’ll also show you something about the Messiah by what I allow to happen to his forerunner.”<sup>4</sup>

John gets handed over, Jesus gets handed over, and guess who else gets handed over?

**Mark 13:9 You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues.**

**Mark 13:11 Whenever you are handed over and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say.**

**Mark 13:12 Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child.**

It happened to Jesus, it happened to John, and it will happen to us. Don’t lose heart when you are mistreated because of your faith in Christ. That’s all part of God’s glorious plan. You’re following in the Master’s footsteps.<sup>5</sup>

Those are legs 2 and 3 of Mark’s three-legged gospel. Leg #2 is that Jesus would suffer and die. And leg #3 is discipleship – we are called to follow Jesus’ steps.

## **Already but Not Yet**

You say, “That’s great, but it doesn’t really sound much like a kingdom. What good is this kingdom? If we all just suffer and die – what’s the difference between that and no kingdom at all?” Is it that the kingdom is still future? It’s just not here yet? What did Jesus say?

**Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near.**

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word *to hand over* can simply mean *to be arrested*, or it can mean *to be betrayed*, depending on the context. There’s no betrayal in the context here, so it’s fine to translate it *arrested*.

<sup>3</sup> Mark draws attention to this word in the way he uses it. Instead of saying John was handed over to some authority, or to imprisonment, he just says “handed over.” That’s somewhat of an unusual use that draws attention to the term itself.

<sup>4</sup> Mark doesn’t say who handed John over. The context may even imply that it was God who handed him over.

<sup>5</sup> This would have been a great encouragement to the readers of Mark who were being persecuted by Nero.

So is it here or not? What's the first part of Jesus' statement? **The time has come.** If the kingdom isn't here right now, then the time has not come yet. If the time has come (literally, the time has been fulfilled), that means the waiting is over. So it has to be now.<sup>6</sup>

So what are we to make of this? Well, as we continue through the book, Jesus is going to tell us a lot more about the kingdom. In fact, going around preaching sermons about the kingdom was Jesus primary activity on earth. If you were to summarize all of the content of Jesus' preaching – the parables, the Sermon on the Mount, the Upper Room Discourse, Olivet Discourse, the rebukes, the commands, the comforts, the promises - all the red letters in your NT, what sentence would be an accurate summary of all of it? What was the controlling theme of everything Jesus preached? Love your enemy? Down with the Pharisees? Care for the poor and oppressed? Here's Mark's answer to that question:

**Mark 1:14 After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.**

And what is the **gospel of God**?

**15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near.**

He preached about the kingdom.

**Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”**

**Matthew 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom.**

**Matthew 9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom.**

**Luke 8:1 Jesus traveled about preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.**

Then Jesus died and rose from the dead, and after his resurrection, he stayed around for 40 days before ascending into heaven. Doing what?

**Acts 1:3 After his suffering He appeared to these men over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.**

Why didn't Jesus just ascend back to heaven right away after his resurrection? Because he wasn't done preaching about the kingdom. Every preacher has his hobbyhorse – for Jesus it was the kingdom of God, because that's what the entire Bible is about. Everything in the Bible is, in one way or another, about God's kingdom. On page 1 of the Bible God creates man and talks to him about ruling the world. And as you go through the Bible, more and more information is revealed about what that kingdom will be like.

The promises of the kingdom touched every aspect of human life. It was a *political* hope, in that there will be no injustice, no oppression, evil governments will be destroyed, and a king like David – even greater than David, would be on the throne.<sup>7</sup> It was an *economic* hope because there will be no poverty, hunger, famine or deprivation.<sup>8</sup> It was even an environmental hope. The curse on the earth will be reversed.<sup>9</sup> And above all, it was a spiritual hope. The power of sin would be destroyed, God's people would be restored to closeness with God and would know him with an intimacy and joy beyond anything that was ever known in the past, and Yahweh would be universally worshiped around the world as the one true God.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> That last word can be translated either *here* or *near*. But even if we follow the NIV and translate it “near,” still, we have to deal with the fact that Jesus also said the time has come. Also, the word translate **is near** is in the perfect tense, which points to a completed act with ongoing impact. So even if it means “near,” he's saying that the arrival of its nearness was an event that had taken place with ongoing effects.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel 7, 2 Sam.7, Ps.110.

<sup>8</sup> Isa.32:1-8, 35:1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Isa.11,65.

<sup>10</sup> Ps.22:27, 72:11, 86:9.

That's what the people were looking forward to, which is great, but there were a lot of misconceptions about the kingdom that Jesus needed to clear up. And there was also a lot of new information about the kingdom that Jesus wanted to reveal. And so he spent all his time preaching and teaching about the kingdom.

So as we move through the gospel, Jesus is going to teach us a lot of things about the nature of the kingdom, and why it's so different from what was expected. In ch.4 he'll tell some parables about how the kingdom will not come in suddenly, but gradually. That's why at first it's so unimpressive. And he'll explain how the kingdom is all about the hearts of the people. It's not mainly political or external – it's mainly an issue of people submitting to the rule of the messianic King from their hearts. That spiritual part of it was probably the least understood part from the OT. In ch.9 we find out that there are only two possibilities: either enter the kingdom, or be thrown into hell.<sup>11</sup> And in ch.10 we find out that it's almost impossible for a rich person to enter, and no one enters unless they receive it in humility, like a little child.<sup>12</sup> And in ch.12, the clearer your understanding of the law of God, the closer you are to entering the kingdom.<sup>13</sup> So Jesus will have a lot more to say about it, but for now Mark just gives us the basic essence of Jesus message: The time has come for the kingdom, therefore **repent and believe**.

## Participation in the Kingdom

### Repent and Believe because of the Nearness of the Kingdom

Now, what does that sentence tell you about the kingdom? When Jesus says that the reason we must repent and believe is because of the nearness of the kingdom – what does that tell you about the kingdom? The implication is, if you don't repent and believe, you don't enter the kingdom. When it comes time for that stage of the kingdom where God's enemies are all destroyed and the righteous are all brought into the glorious wonders of the kingdom, when that day comes, which side of all that are you going to be on? It all depends on whether you repent and believe.

If you're disappointed about this slow, gradual development of the kingdom, and about the fact that Jesus came initially in lowliness and humility and suffering – don't be. If he would have put the kingdom in place suddenly, we'd all be in hell. His patience is what gave time for our repentance. And his continued patience is giving time for the repentance of more people.

So all that to say that the kingdom has come, but not in its final form. It was inaugurated at Jesus' first coming, it's growing now, and will be fully in place at his Second Coming. It's already but not yet. And Mark doesn't explain all that yet, but he wants to prepare us for it in the very first verse of the body of the book, so he puts the announcement of the arrival of the kingdom in the same sentence with the handing over of John the Baptist, which forces the reader to start asking questions about the nature of this kingdom that Jesus will answer later in the book.

But what he does make crystal clear is this: the fact that the time has been fulfilled and kingdom has been inaugurated means one thing: repent and believe. If you can't follow all the details of what I said about the kingdom in the OT, and the prophecies and promises, and the gradual unfolding nature of it, and the first and second coming, and all the various stages, that's fine. Here's the one thing you need to know about it for now: the fact that it has arrived means we all need to **repent and believe**.

### Response Required

Mark wants us to understand that the arrival of the kingdom requires immediate human decision. No herald would ever come into a city and announce: A new king has just been crowned over our nation. And all citizens are now called to, you know, consider maybe accepting him as your king – when you're ready.

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<sup>11</sup> Mk.9:47.

<sup>12</sup> Mk.10:23-24, 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Mk.12:34.

He's a gentleman – he won't force himself on you. Just give it some thought." No. The proclamation would be, "Great news! We have a new king. Everyone is required to bow the knee. Rebels will be destroyed." You need to pick a side.

A new king takes the throne and you can either bow the knee to him as the king, or you can ignore his kingship and suffer the consequences. But there is no neutrality. The historical information we have about Jesus is not like reports of the Loch Ness monster. You hear those and think, "Hmm, sounds like there's probably something there. I wonder what that could be?" And then when you're done wondering, you just stop thinking about it and get on with your life. You can do that with Loch Ness. You can remain undecided and non-committal about things like that. But Jesus won't let us take that approach with the information about the arrival of his kingdom. Jesus announced it, he proved it, and he requires that we repent and believe.

## Faith

It's striking that the emphasis Jesus has right from the beginning, and throughout his ministry, is on believing the gospel. That's how this kingdom will be established - not by weapons and warfare, but by individual people believing the announcement of the good news. I say that's striking because it's different from what you would normally expect. When a herald came into town proclaiming good news from the battlefield, or good news about the king, you wouldn't expect a big effort to get people to believe it. It would be natural for the people to believe the news. But evidently there's something about *this* news that is going to be hard to believe. And so Jesus' first command is that the people believe it, and throughout the gospel you will see Jesus rebuke the people who don't believe, and praise the people who do believe. Everything hinges on faith.

And I've told you many times, there are two aspects to saving faith: believing and trusting. You believe information, and you trust a person. You believe what God's Word says to be true, and you trust Jesus enough to actually follow him. So when you feel like this way would make you happy, but Jesus says that way is better, if you trust him as your guide, you'll choose his way. If you trust yourself more than you trust him, you'll stick with the way that seems best to you. So Jesus spent all his time calling people to faith – faith and repentance.

## Repentance

His message was, **The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel.** Repentance and belief always go together. If you try to separate them, you destroy them both.

If you just focus on repentance, it won't work, because there is no true repentance apart from faith. Repentance is turning away from sin back toward God, and only the heart that truly believes the gospel and that really trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ will do that. If a person doesn't trust Christ, he might turn away from some sin, but all he'll do is turn away from that sin to something else, and that's not repentance. It's not repentance if you just give up some sin. It's not repentance unless you give up that sin in order to turn back toward God. It wouldn't have been repentance if the Prodigal Son just left the pigsty. What made it repentance was the fact that he left it in order to return to his father. You come back to God. You pursue nearness with God. And the only way to do that is through faith.

So you cannot have repentance without faith. Nor can you have faith without repentance. There are many people who try to make that division. These are people who want to avoid legalism and preserve salvation through faith alone, not by works, but then they go too far and say, "Repentance is a work, therefore repentance is not required for salvation." They say first you believe, and then, later on, down the road you get around to repenting. This is a very common teaching.

But you can never separate repentance and faith. Jesus even put repentance first – **Repent and believe.** You can't have repentance come later on, down the road, but not at the beginning, because if a person claims to believe the gospel, and yet refuses to repent and turn from his sin back towards God, he proves that he doesn't really believe the gospel. The gospel tells me that Jesus is better than this sin I'm

committing. And if I say, “I believe that, but I’m still going to prefer this sin over Jesus,” that proves that I don’t really believe that Jesus is better.

And where you have unrepentance, that hinders the growth of whatever little bit of faith you might have. If you have some faith in your heart, but then you start hanging on to is a sin and refuse to give it up, that will prevent you from increasing your faith. And it will kill the faith that you have. So you need faith to have repentance, and you need repentance to have faith; they depend on each other and they build on each other. So what do we tell unbelievers? Do we tell them to believe first, or do we tell them to repent first, or what? We tell them the same thing Jesus told them: **repent and believe**. John the Baptist preached a message of **repentance for the forgiveness of sins** in v.4. Then Jesus comes in v.15 and the first words we hear out of his mouth are: **“The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe”** Then Jesus calls his disciples, trains them up, and sends them out to do what?

**Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.**

After Jesus died and rose and went back to heaven, then what did the Apostles preach?

**Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent forgiveness of your sins.**

**Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out**

That road building work of preparing hearts to receive the Messiah kept going after John’s death, after Jesus’ death, and it’s still going today. We’re still working to prepare people’s hearts to be receptive to the Lord’s coming by preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

There’s a new King in town, and before he brings down the hammer of judgment on all God’s enemies, he is offering full amnesty and forgiveness to all rebels – but to get that amnesty, you must come to him with a repentant heart. You can approach him, but you must do so with tears. And you must be willing to sever your ties with the enemy army and embrace this new kingdom completely.

## Part of the Gospel

And please notice, when Jesus was calling people to repentance, he was preaching the Gospel. I point that out because there are many today who are trying to say that the gospel is only the information about Jesus’ death and resurrection. But that’s not true. We learn from Jesus that part of the gospel is the call to repent.<sup>14</sup>

The death and resurrection is one leg of the gospel, but the call to discipleship is also a leg, which is why the Apostles talked about obeying or disobeying the gospel.<sup>15</sup> The gospel is not just information; it’s also a command. And it’s a tough sell. You can fill a stadium if you are a preacher who just tells people to believe, but leaves out the part about repenting.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> But Mark is very clear that Jesus was preaching the gospel even prior to his death. He was preaching about the kingdom, and calling people to repentance, and all of that is part of the gospel.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Thes.1:8, 1 Pe.4:17.

<sup>16</sup> There is a superficial humility that people will give lip service to, but true brokenness over sin requires genuine faith. A good example of a repentant attitude is reflected in the prayer of general confession from the Old Book of Common Prayer: Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men: We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One writer was making a point about how shallow repentance tends to be in our culture, and so he re-wrote the prayer of general confession in the words of modern American society: Benevolent and easy-going Father: we have occasionally been guilty of errors of judgment. We have lived under the deprivations of heredity and the disadvantages of environment. We have sometimes failed to act in accordance with common sense. We have done the best we could in the circumstances; and have been careful not to ignore the common standards of decency; and we are glad to think that we are fairly normal. Do thou, O Lord, deal lightly with our infrequent lapses. Be thy own sweet Self with those who admit they are not perfect; According to the unlimited tolerances which we have a right to expect from thee. And grant us as indulgent Parent that we may hereafter continue to live a

# Preaching the Kingdom

## Preaching Brings Faith and Repentance

So how do we do it? What's the best method for accomplishing that impossible task? There are a lot of different ways to influence people – which method is best for this kind of influence – changing hearts of stone into hearts of flesh? Bringing people from stubborn pride to broken humility? From unbelief to faith. From sin and rebellion to repentance? What's the best method for having that kind of influence with people?

## John the Baptist

What method did John the Baptist use? Preaching.

### **Mark 1:4 And so John came preaching a baptism of repentance**

The masses didn't just wander out of Jerusalem and Judea and start randomly confessing their sins just for fun. They were moved to do that by John's preaching. There is awesome power in preaching.

## Jesus

What about Jesus – what method did he use? Was it mainly having coffee with people and building relationships? Small groups? Counseling? Writing books? Debates? No, the primary method Jesus used was exactly the same as John's.

### **Mark 1:14 After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God.**

Whenever you see a Bible writer give a summary of what Jesus did and boils it down to one, main thing, it's always preaching. And Jesus himself said it.

### **Mark 1:38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues**

The reason Jesus came was to preach.

### **Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach**

Throughout the whole book of Mark, that's the main thing you're going to see Jesus doing. Did he do other things? Jesus basically did three things: he preached, he did miracles, and he trained his disciples. But the central activity was the preaching. He trained his disciples so they could also preach, and he did miracles to prove that his preaching was from God, but the main objective was to preach.<sup>17</sup>

## The Apostles

What about the Apostles?

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harmless and happy life and keep our self-respect. Amen (cited in the NIVAC).

<sup>17</sup> You see that same thing in the other gospels. Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach Then he describes the calling of those first disciples, and then this: **Matthew 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom**

**Matthew 9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom**

**Matthew 11:1 he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.**

**Luke 4:44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.**

**Luke 8:1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.**

**Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve--designating them apostles ... that he might send them out to preach**

**Mark 6:12 They went out and preached**

**Matthew 10:7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'**

When they ask Jesus about when the end will come, he said:

**Matthew 24:14 this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world and then the end will come.**

So did they do it? No. After Jesus died, they went back to fishing. And so Jesus had to tell Peter 3 times: “If you love me, feed my sheep. Don’t go fishing. Feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed my sheep.” And they finally got the message.

**Acts 10:42 He (Jesus) commanded us to preach to the people.**

And in Acts 6, when there was massive administrative pressure because of thousands of new church members and no systems in place, and widows being neglected and people grumbling and all the rest, the Apostles did something that very, very few pastors will ever do, and very few church would allow their pastors to do – they made the extraordinary decision to delegate all that administrative work and devote their full time to preaching and prayer.

**Us**

That was Jesus’ priority, it’s what he trained the Apostles to do, and it’s what the Apostles passed on to us. When Paul gives his final word of exhortation to Timothy, of all the things Paul could have impressed on him, this is what he said (listen to how solemn this charge is):

**Timothy 4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word**

## **Priority: Spiritual Above Physical**

There are people who teach that Jesus’ method was to first meet people’s physical needs, and only after that did he address their spiritual needs. And so they say we should do soup kitchens and feed the poor and all that before we try to present the gospel to people. That’s dead wrong. Jesus’ priority was always spiritual needs. We’ll see that as we go through the book. The first time is right here in this chapter – in v.37, where instead of healing people who need healing, Jesus leaves so he can preach in all the villages, because that’s why he came.<sup>18</sup>

When we try to become more modern than God and come up with ways to communicate the truth of Scripture to people that are better than preaching, we shoot ourselves in the foot, because preaching is the primary method God has said he would bless. God works through preaching in ways he doesn’t work through other methods. Jesus’ objective was to get people to **repent and believe**, and the best way to make that happen is through preaching.

And if you think that has no application for you if you’re not a preacher, think again. It’s important that you understand that it’s preaching that changes the human heart, because guess what you have – a human heart. We all struggle with spiritual problems – pride, enslavement to various sins, lack of faith, lack of joy, etc. So what’s the solution? You can find some help in books and counseling and following godly examples and fellowship and all those kinds of things, but don’t neglect listening to good

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<sup>18</sup> People were coming for healing, but Jesus was more interested in preaching. Another example is in 6:34, when Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them, and so he began teaching them many things (not, “he had compassion on them and so he began healing and giving them food). He gave food later, but the first thing his compassion did was drive him to teach them.

preaching. That's the primary means of changing the human heart, because change comes through faith, and faith comes through hearing.

## **Conclusion: We Need a King**

So, that's the good news of the kingdom. Does it sound like good news to you? Does the demand to repent and believe and follow Christ even to death sound like good news? It's great news. It's great news for me, because I desperately need a king. Why? Because I'm incapable of ruling myself. I've proved that a billion times. Whenever I try to rule myself, I fail. And isn't that true of you as well? We need a strong, good king because we are incapable of ruling ourselves. We're incapable of choosing the right path. Incapable of doing what is right. We are incapable, in constructing our own kingdoms, of a life that's even a little bit pleasing to God, because we want God's position on the throne.

Why am I impatient and short with my wife? Or why do I take her for granted and neglect her and start acting like she doesn't even exist? Why do I retract back into myself and become oblivious to all the people around me and their needs? It's because I'm immersed in my own kingdom.

Why do we get so uptight when someone stands in the way of what we're trying to do? Is it because we're concerned about God's kingdom? We'd like to think so, but if we're honest, we have to admit that most of our anger has absolutely nothing to do with God's kingdom. Our anger has to do with our kingdom. I don't want you to be so rebellious against king me that you have the audacity to disagree with one of my opinions. I don't want you to be obstructionist and hinder the agenda of king me.

I'm constantly jumping back and forth between two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Darrell. The kingdom of Darrell is a place where Darrell Ferguson sits on the throne and expects his wife and kids and all the people around him – as well as the weather and circumstances and everything else to serve him and accommodate his preferences, and to adjust to his comfort and convenience.

And it's not a happy place. Recently Nikki made this crumbly dessert and I was walking through the kitchen, and I wanted just one bite. So I took a fork, and carefully got the perfect bite on there. And I went to put it in my mouth, and missed. I bumped my bottom lip with the fork and everything fell off onto the floor. And I had a flash of anger for a moment. Why? Because something went wrong in the kingdom of God? No, because something went wrong in the kingdom of Darrell.

I hate my time in that kingdom. Every hour I spend in that kingdom is miserable. The whole time I'm up on that throne, I'm annoyed. Somebody or something isn't falling in line, and I feel slighted. There's pleasure in that kingdom, but there's no joy. So I need the Savior to come and save me from my lame kingdom and bring me into a real kingdom. My biggest need right now isn't for Jesus to come and defeat ISIS, or to come and remove Kim Jong Ill, or to bring justice and annihilate all the wicked people in the world. He will do all that eventually, but that's not the biggest need right now. My biggest need first is for King Jesus to come and conquer king Darrell.

Mark this: Jesus came into this world to destroy your kingdom, and that is great news for you. The best thing Jesus could ever do for you is to destroy your kingdom and establish your place in his kingdom. Your kingdom is a place of nothing but frustration and anger and disappointment and, eventually, total destruction. His kingdom is a place where a real King is on the throne, and your greatest fulfillment and joy will come from serving that King.