

## Handout 1: Gospel of Mark Notes (Talk 12)

Ryan Carroll, Reformation Fellowship, April 25, 2021

Things to briefly review:

1. Mark's Gospel written by?
2. Mark' Gospel written when?
3. Mark's Gospel first of gospels?
4. Purpose of Gospels?

### Summary:

The goal of this talk is to review the historical and literary context of Mark's Gospel covered during the first 11 talks of this series. In order to accomplish this, we will use the final passage covered in the previous talk (Mark 4:1-13) as a conduit for review AND also anticipation as we begin moving forward into the next section of Mark's account.

### Outline:

1. Where we left off in talk 11 (last year): Mark 4:1-13
  - a. Mark notes a new period in Jesus's ministry (Mk. 4:34; parallel in Mt. 13:34-35)
    - i. Jesus will no longer speak to the crowds through direct teaching but now only in Parables
      1. Primary focus of Jesus' preaching/teaching prior to timing in Mark 4: **The Kingdom of God** (Mk. 1:15)
        - a. Examples of direct communication about/related to the Kingdom BEFORE this period:
          - i. Mk. 1:15
          - ii. Mt. 5-8
          - iii. Mt. 8:10-13
          - iv. Lk. 4:14-27
          - v. Lk. 7:18-30
        2. Primary focus of Jesus' recorded Parables subsequent to Mark 4: **The Kingdom of God**
          - a. Some examples of speaking in parables after this period: "The Kingdom of God is like..."
            - i. Parable of the Sower (Mk. 4:3-9)
            - ii. Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Mt. 13:24-30)
            - iii. Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Mt. 13:45-46)
            - iv. Parable of Farmer and the Seed (Mk. 4:26-29)
            - v. Parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30-32)
2. Why does Jesus make this change to the way he communicates with the multitude?
  - a. Jesus' citation of Isaiah 6:9 (Mk. 4:12) is the clue/key to this:
    - i. What is the context of this statement (6:9) in Isaiah? (read aloud)

1. Israel is no longer listening/hearing Yahweh, their God (Is. 1:2-3)
  2. Yahweh's patience with Israel and Judah's rebellion was running out. Judgement was decreed and would not be held back.  
Therefore....
    - a. Yahweh orders Isaiah to speak in such a way so that the people will continue to not "see or hear", IN ORDER THAT they would NOT REPENT and JUDGEMENT would come
    - b. Yahweh had even begun speaking to Judah/Israel in parables (Is. 5:1-7; "Parable of the Vineyard" = Israel/Judah would be decimated)
  3. As was promised during Isaiah's ministry, Assyria exiled/destroyed the Northern tribes/kingdom of Israel due to their covenant unfaithfulness
  4. Judah's turn was next: Babylon would eventually come after the preaching of Isaiah—the day of Yahweh (of judgement) upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah was on its way.
- ii. Therefore, what is the significance of Jesus citing Isaiah 6:9 here, now?
1. Jesus' speaking in parables points in the same direction as it did in Isaiah's day: Judgement is coming
    - a. Parables are NOT simply a "puzzling" way to force people to think (though it did)
    - b. Parables are NOT simply stories enabling memory
  2. How do we know this move on Jesus' part signaled coming judgement?
- b. Historical and Literary Context of Mark's Gospel that points in this direction:
- i. How is context of Jesus' ministry like Isaiah's time and ministry?
    1. First century Judea was a tumultuous time/place
      - a. Four centuries of subjugation at the hands of various empires AFTER a partial return of Jews to Judea after Babylonian exile
      - b. Hellenization and apostasy were rampant
      - c. The Temple was being misused
      - d. An unrighteous king, in Herod, was in power as a puppet of Roman subjugation
      - e. Memories of the Maccabean Revolt that had led to a short period of Jewish autonomy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC were smoldering in the hearts of nationalist insurrectionists and would be "messiahs" who now wanted to lead the people against Rome
      - f. Injustice felt both under Roman oppression AND by Jewish brigands was rampant

- g. High Priesthood was a corrupt lineage of power brokers
- h. The Rise of Factions among Israelite elites and religious sects all with differing beliefs about what Israel's true problem was and what the solution to that problem would entail:
  - i. Sadducees
  - ii. Pharisees
  - iii. Essenes
  - iv. Sanhedrin
  - v. Herodians
- i. Throughout the entire exilic and post-exilic period, there was a continual longing for Yahweh to finally make good on his promises and return to overthrow injustice and oppression and ultimately set up the reign of Yahweh in history (i.e. The Kingdom of God)
- ii. It was into this historical landscape that the "beginning of the Gospel of Jesus" (according to Mark) broke in:
  1. Mark introduces his narrative by explaining that Isaiah's vision of Yahweh's long awaited, promised return (Is. 40) was imminent in the ministry of John the Baptist as the herald in the wilderness: Yahweh (the Mighty One) was coming!
  2. John's primary message: Repent!
    - a. As it turns out, Yahweh's coming, according to John the Baptist was focused more on dealing with Israel's own sin rather than the external factors and tumult ruling in the political/social landscape (Mk. 1:4/Mt. 3:5-12)
  3. Mark's introduction of the gospel of Jesus also included a citation of prophetic warning from Malachi 3:
    - a. Yahweh's sudden return to his Temple would bring judgement upon the temple and those who ruled/served in it and generally on all who commit wickedness.
  4. John's role as herald/messenger announcing Yahweh's imminent return prepared the entire nation of Israel to meet their God: either as a repentant people to be forgiven OR as those who would be swept away and burned like chaff (Mt. 3:12) and replaced by children of Abraham raised up from stones (Mt. 3:9)
    - a. John ministry was significant:
      - i. Every citizen of Jerusalem went out to hear him (Mk. 1:5/Mt. 3:5)
      - ii. Entire region of Judea went out to listen (Mk. 1:5/Mt. 3:5)

- iii. Entire district around the Jordan went out to listen (Mt. 3:5)
  - b. Jesus' assessment of John's prophetic/heraldic role:
    - i. "Truly, truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Mt. 11:11/Lk. 7:28)
    - ii. John's role of heralding THE long-awaited return of Yahweh (in the person of the Messiah) placed him at the pinnacle of God's purposes
  - c. On John's heals and call for repentance before the coming of the Mighty One, Jesus arrives and is proclaimed by both John AND the voice from heaven as the expected One—those who were paying attention should have been in the know. Israel was without excuse AND those who refused to listen to John would be held to account:
    - i. "The Pharisees and lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves not having been baptized by John" (Mt.)
- 5. Jesus' early ministry proclaims that in his arrival the Kingdom of God has come near:
  - a. This "good news" of the arrival of God's reign (as foretold in Isaiah's) is embodied in Jesus:
    - 1. Forgiving of sins (Mk. 2:5)
    - 2. Healing/Restoring bodies (Mk. 1:31; 1:34; 1:41; 2:11; 3:5)
    - 3. Casting out the demons/Satan (Mk. 1:25; 3:11)
    - 4. Inviting sinners (lost sheep) to fellowship (Mk. 2:14-17)
    - 5. Miraculous Deeds (see above)
    - 6. Calling a group of 12 disciples who were granted authority in His name (Mk. 3:13-15)
  - b. Response to Jesus and his Kingdom Message:
    - i. Multitudes were clamoring for Jesus' physical benefits/blessings (Mk. 3:7-8)
    - ii. The Jewish leaders were labeling him "possessed by the Ruler of the demons" --a charge that could lead to death (Mk. 3:22)
    - iii. His own family attempted to take him away by force because they had feared he had lost his senses (Mk. 3:21)

- iii. The above negative responses to Jesus ministry, THE ministry embodying the arrival of Yahweh and the benefits of the Shalom, for a people who should have been prepared for that arrival by John's ministry, I would assert is why we know that Jesus began speaking in parables and that this speaking in parables was a sign of impending judgement (not for all believers everywhere for all time—though another judgement looms in our own future), but for the house of Israel first, who failed to recognize the time of their visitation by Yahweh and appropriately heed him and his message. A new day of Yahweh was on the horizon (and in the lifetime) of many who
  - c. Jesus' speaking in Parables in Mark 4 therefore signified a distinction that Jesus began to make between those who were "listening" and those, like in Isaiah's day, who were NOT heeding the words of Yahweh.
    - 1. Jesus makes distinction between his listeners:
      - a. "Insiders": Jesus' followers/disciples
        - i. Jesus wants these to be in the know ("to you the mystery of the Kingdom has been given" (4:11a))
      - b. "Outsiders": the crowd/multitude/Jewish leaders
        - i. Jesus wants these people to be left in the dark ("they get everything in parables" (4:11b-12))
    - 2. Why would Jesus want this to be the case?
      - a. "So that seeing they may see and NOT perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand **lest they return and be forgiven**" (Mk. 4:12/Isaiah 6:9)
      - b. The people had been sufficiently invited AND warned and anyone not able to grasp and truly respond to Jesus' ministry in repentance would undergo judgement
  - d. What does this all mean?
  - e. Where do we go from here with the parables in Mark 4