

**Mark 1:14-20, Summary and Call**  
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**Overview**

1. 1:14-15 is a summary through 1:39, the last point in the book in which Jesus is said to "preach." After this he devotes himself to teaching, and leaves the preaching to others. (The difference will become clear as we work through the book.)
2. The very first episode (16-20) is the selection of the first members of the group who will carry on the work of preaching! This is the first of a series of glimpses into the formation and training of the Twelve. The next few are 2:14 (call of Matthew), 3:13ff (ordination, *poiew* "to make"), 6:7 (sends them out two by two), then 16:15 (Great Commission). The Lord's ministry begins, not with the multitudes, but with the disciples, the few individuals who will carry on. We have seen this already in the distribution of the verbs "preach" and "teach." A pattern for our work: the splashy work of a Billy Graham or a Luis Palau grabs our attention, but what will really last will be the few individuals they train and nurture to carry on the work.

**A. 14-15, Intro to Galilean Ministry**

1. The Circumstance: after John was "betrayed."
  - a) Same word *paradidomi* as used for our Lord; sets up for the end of the book. John, preached, so did Jesus; John was betrayed (how, we do not know); so was Jesus.
  - b) But we have already observed that the Lord in turn passes the work of preaching on to his disciples, and they in turn must be prepared to be betrayed and to suffer for him (Mark 13:9,10, where we have both *paradidomi* and *khrussw*).
2. The Place: Galilee. John's gospel makes clear that there was an extensive Judaeen ministry (though with the first miracle in Cana of Galilee, 2:11), but Mark tells the story from Peter's perspective, emphasizing Galilee as the place where the message met its initial acceptance.
  - a) Makes strong contrast with 1:5
  - b) Fulfills Isa. 9:1ff. Those who first felt the blow of Babylon and Assyria will be the first to see the Messiah.
3. The Activity: Preaching  
Distinguish "preach" <2784>, 1:15, from "teach" <1321>, 1:22.
  - a) Preach, doing the work of a herald, getting the attention of people who don't know what's going on. Supported today by the gift of the evangelist.
    - 1) John does it in 1:4,7
    - 2) Jesus does it only in 1:14, 38, 39.
    - 3) Afterward, done only by
      - a> those healed by the Lord (usually translated "publish"),

1:45; 5:20; 7:36,

b> or disciples, 3:14; 6:12; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15, 20.

- 4) Moral: importance of working through disciples!
- b) Teach, instructing those whose attention has already been gained. Supported today by the gift of teaching.
- 1) The disciples are only said once to have done this (6:30).
  - 2) Once (7:7) it occurs in a quotation from Isaiah.
  - 3) The other 15 times are all of the Lord Jesus, in chh. 1, 1, 2, 4, 4, 6, 6, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12, 14.
- c) As usual, the organized church has got it confused with the pervasive notion of "preaching a sermon." What one "preaches" or proclaims is the message of salvation in a primarily evangelistic context. A "sermon," as an address on a sacred theme to God's people, ought to be taught, not preached, but we never say "he taught a sermon." Hold fast the form of sound words.

#### 4. The Message: The Gospel

##### a) Content:

- 1) "The time is fulfilled," cf. Gal. 4:4, the time anticipated by the prophetic promises. Suggests the important notion of a divine timetable. To us, things may seem out of control, but God has ordained a time for everything, and his trains never run late.
  - 2) "The kingdom of God is at hand." Verb as in Jas 5:8, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Still to come in its full glory (9:1), as indeed the Lord taught his disciples to pray, though aspects of it can be experienced now (Lk 17:21; Lk 11:20 = Mt 12:28; cf. Heb 6:5 "have tasted ... the powers of the world to come").
- b) Expected response:
- 1) Repentance: a change of mind, a conversion, submitting ourselves to this rule.
  - 2) Belief: from a geopolitical viewpoint, the Jews would be hard pressed to recognize this, with Rome at its strongest.
- c) Dispensational teachers sometimes try to distinguish different gospels, but Paul preached this same gospel, Acts 20:25. Cf. the sermon in Athens: God made you, and now commands you. The focus on the substitutionary work of the Lord in 1 Cor. 15 is only a part, albeit a very important one, of the mechanism that permits us to live as God's subjects rather than die as his enemies. The basis of the gospel even today is the authority of the Creator and the imminent arrival of his kingdom in the person of Jesus Christ.

#### B. 16-20, Call of the Fishermen

For each pair of brothers consider their situation, the invitation,

and their response.

1. Simon and Andrew are casting a hand-net into the sea from the shore. James and John are mending drag-nets in a boat with their father and hired help--apparently, a little better off. But still, all are manual laborers, unlearned men. Exemplifies 1 Cor. 1:26, that God has not called many who are wise, mighty, or noble after the flesh. Academic credentials, then as now, are a hindrance rather than a help in the Lord's work.

2. We have the words of the invitation only for Simon and Andrew; perhaps he said the same to James and John. They contain a command and a promise.

a) Command: "Follow me." Not an option. Mark emphasizes the Lord's authority in commanding their obedience.

b) Promise: "I will make you to become fishers of men."

1) The evangelistic task has the Lord's own authority. In the modern climate, many insist that it is immoral or narrow-minded to "proselytize," to seek to win others to the Lord. We should (so they say) hold our own beliefs, and let others hold theirs. For us as Christians, these two are incompatible. Our beliefs REQUIRE us to urge others to change their position, and follow the Lord.

2) Note the emphasis on process. Not, "I will make you fishers of men," but, "I will make you TO BECOME fishers of men." Does not happen overnight, and we will see the patient care that the Lord must expend on his disciples before they are ready for the commission of 16:15.

3. Response:

a) Both sets of brothers left something.

1) Simon and Andrew leave their nets--their material property, the means of winning their bread--impressive.

2) James and John leave their father, along with the property--even more impressive.

3) Moral: It costs something to follow the Lord Jesus. The principle goes back to Abraham in Gen. 12:1, whom God called to leave "thy country, and thy kindred, and thy father's house." Luke 14:26-33 is still the standard. What a high hurdle--and yet, consider the alternative, for if we cling to worldly associations we shall lose our own soul.

b) In both cases, the obedience is immediate. From John we know that Andrew and John had been followers of the Baptist, and had already met Jesus as much as a year before, but Mark mentions none of this. His presentation of the episode emphasizes the point at which we make a definite decision to follow the Lord. Elijah warned the people of Israel (1 Kings 18:21) not to halt between two opinions, but to make their

choice between Baal and the Lord. In the same way, each of us must choose between the world and the Lord Jesus.