

before spending time with him. How can you safeguard yourself from this? Pray for any you know who are in danger of being so busy serving God that he is actually being squeezed out of their lives.

2. Jesus faced rejection from many sources. Why did the following reject him? — members of his family, the teachers of the law, the people of Nazareth, some of those who heard the disciples.

Jesus came to bring salvation in the face of rejection and hostility — from men and from Satan himself. His disciples too had to face similar rejection. In what ways have you been misunderstood or rejected because of your faith? What reassurance can you find in these verses?

Day 5. The later Galilean ministry

Mark 4: 1-34

Structure

This is the largest grouping of Jesus' parables by Mark. All three parables illustrate the character of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Interest point: the kingdom of God

The phrase 'the kingdom of God' stands for God's reign of salvation and righteousness at the end of time. This cosmic saving rule of God began in the ministry of Christ, and was strengthened by his death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit. It will finally be consummated in the end of the world and the re-creation of the universe. Thus the kingdom of God has begun and is with us now, yet not completely.

In the first parable (4:1-20) notice that the sower and the seed are presented as being good and the climax of the story is the good harvest rather than the attempts of the poorer soils to produce a harvest. In your own words, what sort of responses to the seed are characterized here? Can you think of any of your friends who have responded to the word of God in a similar way to one of the soils? Pray for them now, that they will become more receptive to the truth, or praise God for them if they are already bearing fruit.

Jesus was urging his hearers to listen carefully and act responsibly to his words (21-25). Yet on the other hand it would appear in the parable of the growing seed (26-29) and the mustard seed (30-32) that man's part in the bringing in of the kingdom is non-existent. What was Jesus saying about the kingdom of God in these two parables? How would it come and what would it be like? List some of its features. What does this say about the ways in which God chooses to work?

Weekend

Look up the following references to Jesus' rejection and suffering which are found later in the Gospel: 5:17; 8:31 - 9:1; 9:12-13, 30-32; 10:32-34,45; 11:18; 12:1-12. If you have time, read the account of the crucifixion in chapters 14 and 15 as well.



www.elimcarlisle.org

Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

"This extract from Meeting With God published by Inter-Varsity Press, is used with permission"

18th August 2014

Week 51: Mark's gospel, 1 (A detailed study)

Traditionally the author of this Gospel is Mark, who appears at various times in the early days of the church. The reference of Mark 14:51 possibly applies to him. He may have been heavily influenced by Peter. This Gospel would therefore be a record of Peter's personal account of the life of Jesus.

This is the shortest Gospel and possibly the earliest. Matthew and Luke may have used it in writing their own accounts.

Mark may have been writing to Christians in Rome who were facing persecution under the Emperor Nero around AD 60-70. Encouragements to Christians in such a situation can be found throughout the Gospel.

Inevitably there will not be time to look at the Gospel in great detail, but this series will hopefully whet your appetite! But above all pray that you will get to know Jesus better as a result of these studies. Allow him to rise out of the pages of this Gospel, and speak to you.

Good commentaries for reference include the Tyndale Commentary on 'Mark' by R. A. Cole (IVP), 'The Gospel of Mark', by William Lane (the New International Commentary, Paternoster) and Ralph P. Martin, 'Where the Action Is' (Gospel Light).

Day 1. The opening section

Mark 1: 1-13

Structure

These verses are often described as 'the Prologue to Mark's Gospel'. Here he presents the central figure of his account, Jesus. He did not want anyone to be in doubt about whom he was writing.

Interest point

The common theme running through the opening section is that of the wilderness. It is a theme that recurs throughout the Gospel. For any Jewish reader the wilderness or desert stood for a number of things:

- a time of testing and failure after they had left Egypt,
- a time when they were called to repentance,
- a time when God appeared to them in a new way and when he gave them the law as a sign that they were in a special relationship with him,

- a time when they knew his care for and guidance of them, and it was anticipated that when the Messiah came, he would gather the redeemed to him in the wilderness.
1. As you read the Gospel, look out for the wilderness or desert symbolism. Which of the ideas associated with the wilderness do you find present in the opening section?
 2. Repentance was central not only to John's message but also to that of Jesus. What did John say about it? In your own words write down what else you understand by the word. You could ask other Christian friends what they mean by it as well and look up 'repentance' in a concordance.
 3. What is Mark saying about the central figure of his Gospel in this opening section?

What was John's attitude to Jesus? He has been described as the first preacher of the good news of Christ. What is your attitude to Jesus when you are telling others about him? Do you start with what you think about him, so that it ends up with Jesus being almost obscured by you and your experiences? What can you do to prevent this happening?

Day 2 The first phase of the Galilean ministry

Mark 1: 14 - 45

Structure

Mark records a similar pattern at the start of the early phase of the ministry to that of the later phase. Both phases start with Jesus' activity (1:14-15; cf. 3:7-12), followed by the call of the apostles (1:16-20; cf. 3:13-19).

Interest point

The ordinary people addressed Jesus as 'Lord' (7:28), 'Teacher' (9:17), 'Son of David' (10:47-48), 'Master' (10:51). But demoniacs called him 'the Holy One of God' (124), 'Son of God' (3:11), 'Son of the Most High God' (5:7). The demons had superior knowledge of Jesus' identity. They were not acknowledging him as God but as a defensive action were trying to call him to order — they failed!

1. Right from the start the characteristics of the new kingdom or order brought in by Jesus were apparent—both by what he said and by what he did. Note down how you think Jesus' actions here demonstrated its coming.
2. It was impossible not to react in some way to Jesus. Contrast the reactions of the following groups. Why did they react as they did?
 - the disciples
 - the evil spirits
 - the sick

By his words and actions Jesus commanded obedience. Can you think of any time recently when he called you to an act of obedience? What was your reaction?

Day 3. The first phase, continued

Mark 2:1 - 3:6

Structure

These Galilean controversies could be said to be balanced by the five Jerusalem ones in 11:27 - 12:37.

Interest point

The term 'the Son of man' appears twice in this chapter. Then it is only after Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah in 8:29 that Mark uses it again, twelve times, as Jesus discloses his identity to his disciples alone. The phrase may simply have been a substitute that Jesus used for 'I', but at times it possibly had some Messianic connotations (e.g. 14:62). Jesus may have had in mind Daniel's marvellous vision (Daniel 7:9 -14) in using the phrase.

1. Read the passage and then pin-point what issue was at stake in each of the five controversies (2:1-12; 2:13-17; 2:18-22; 2:23-28; 3:1-6). Then beside each point note down Jesus' response to the controversy. What did you discover about the character of Jesus and how he viewed his mission?
2. His claims about himself are stunning in their original context. How challenging do you honestly believe the good news of Jesus is to your own situation? Take each of the five responses and try to apply them to your own circumstances.
3. What could the offer of forgiveness mean to those you know whose lives are broken and guilt-ridden?
4. What about those who lead good lives, acknowledging their own high moral code, but who do not have any time for God?

Pray for those of whom you have been reminded as you have considered these five controversies.

Day 4. Later in the Galilean ministry

Mark 3:7-35; 6:1-13

Structure

As with the earlier phase, this starts with a summary of Jesus' activity followed by the commissioning of the disciples.

Interest point

The idea of rejection occurs throughout this section — those who refuse to accept Jesus and his miracles or who fail to understand him do so because of their hardness of heart. Already in 3:6 the opposition is wanting to kill him.

1. Draw out the similarities in 3:13-18 and 6:6b-13 from the two callings of the disciples. How did Jesus call them and to what? Notice that he first called them to be **with** him. There is a danger that action in serving God can come