

A Talk by B. Cobbey Crisler  
WHAT MARK RECORDED

(Transcription Notes, with Janet Crisler's prior permission to share)

phase, John the Baptist was given this prophetic responsibility to fulfill. We see that the four most prominent disciples of Jesus had probably been prepared or cultivated by John the Baptist.

Mark 1:14

Verse 14. We have "*John put in prison.*" He has already disappeared from the scene. And, "*Jesus comes into Galilee, and his work begins.*"

Verse 15. There are four foundational aspects to the gospel we need to study. Normally, an architect might refer to just one cornerstone in a building. But let's remember that all four of the corners have cornerstones. To that degree, let's ask ourselves if this is not a clue to understanding Mark. We have a foursquare gospel, and at each corner we have a particular point. If this is true, you should be able to compile the information that follows in the gospel under one of the following four headings.

(1) The announcement that, "*the time is fulfilled.*" What does this mean? Prophecy. The time for the fulfillment of prophecy has arrived. So, everything is just **brimming** in the gospel of Mark with this great news. All of the expectation is over for the Messianic prophecy. We have a fulfillment now. What could be more exciting than to be living in an era of fulfilled prophecy? Nothing, apparently, because this is what impels the gospel writers to pick up their pens.

We saw right in the beginning of Mark, Chapter 1, Verse 2, "*As it is written in the prophets.*" It is one of the first things we were to focus on. So, "*the time is fulfilled,*" is one of these foundational cornerstones. Study Mark as if it were a textbook, filled with data that Jesus needed us to know in order to follow him. It is a handbook, so to speak, a textbook where we can find data that can be applied.

Those four foundational points, under "*the time is fulfilled,*" you will see over and over again, explicit or implicit, in the text.

(2) The second one, "*the kingdom of God is at no distance.*" It is right here. Even that idea is radical to Christendom today often because the kingdom of God, or often heaven, is considered to be so far away from

any of us now. It is out of reach, and we're not really behaving ourselves sufficiently to get there. It takes Palomar's 200 inch reflecting telescope to even get a glimpse of it. But we find the founder of Christianity saying, "Not so." His theology is based on the fact that "*the kingdom of God is at hand.*"

Do we act like it is? We moan and we groan most of the time. We wouldn't if our state of mind was the "kingdom-of-God-is-at-hand" and the "prophecies-are-fulfilled." But those are only two of the cornerstones.

(3) The third one is "Repent!" That means to change your concept. Now, we're going very deeply to the roots of what is required of us to get anywhere spiritually. The problem is mental or he never would have stated it in this way.

It would be cruelly misleading if he laid down as one of the four important aspects of his theology the fact that we had to change our concepts of things. The implication is that every human ill, physical, moral, mental, all can be changed mentally. Otherwise, repenting wouldn't make any difference. Changing one's concept wouldn't make any difference.

This might be where maybe we temporarily get off the train leading to Jesus' theology. We may say to ourselves, if our bodies are riddled with cancer, of what avail would it be to change our concept? How would that affect the body? The implication is that this is the panacea. Repent ye. Change your concept about things.

Do you realize what kind of a religion that suggests? It's very revolutionary, in this respect: nothing is incurable from the point of view of Jesus' theology. If you can change your concept, then everything is curable. That's some good news of victory that has yet to hit the human race with any impact like Mark, the hammer.

(4) The fourth and final cornerstone is to "believe the gospel." That "believe" is not just to hold an opinion that waves in the breeze. This is a conviction and a trust in the pronouncements of the gospel of the kingdom of God, and that "kingdom of God is at hand."

With that structure of the gospel in mind, we can do this kind of work together. As a matter of fact, the reward comes from doing this work individually and meeting each other that way. It affects the world's climate by doing this kind of depth research. In your own individual study, try those

★ four columns:

- 1 The time is fulfilled,
- 2 The kingdom of God is at hand,
- 3 Repent ye,
- 4 Believe the gospel,

and see how you can outline the whole gospel in that way.

We may just discover that Peter becomes one of the most polished orators of all time. Yet he is regarded as a rather simplistic fisherman who probably stumbled in Greek and was more at home in his Aramaic.

In Verse 16, Peter and Andrew are introduced to us. The *Anchor Bible* suggests they probably already knew Jesus. That would also conform more readily to John's account. Remember, they met or saw Jesus at the baptism. That would have been down in Jordan. In Verse 14 we're back to Galilee.

There is a recognition factor. "He saw Simon, Andrew his brother." It is not by chance that Jesus appoints his disciples, "He sees them casting a net into the sea: they were fishers." Apparently they were not very good ones. I say that because the Anchor Bible with tongue in cheek tells us that there's no record anywhere in the gospels that the disciples ever caught a fish without the help of Jesus. They were ready for a new profession anyway. ★

Verse 17, "Jesus said, Come after me I will make you to become fishers of men." Notice the intriguing aspect of that call. Because if you weren't intrigued, you'd stay in your fishing boat. "Fishers of men," if you weren't up to the level of seeing the wryness of that appeal, you wouldn't move. But if you were there, "Fishers of men," let us go find out

what that's all about. Then you would have left. They left a living here. Many of us may have, without being aware of it, been summoned by that same Christ-command to follow and be "*fishers of men.*" But we are too busy with our professions, or our professions are our priority.

Verse 18. So, we do not make the same apostolic response as Simon and Andrew did, "*Straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.*"

Verse 19. And "*later James and John.*" They even had a small business going. They were real entrepreneurs.

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Verse 20. Because, "*they left their dad Zebedee with the hired servants.*" They were filling out Social Security forms and everything on these people. "*They left and went after him.*" (Jesus.)

Mark 1:21

Verse 21, "*Straightway on the sabbath day.*"

Let's look at the gospel from above. Let's see the divine structure here that is motivating what we are being told. Aside from simply gathering the first disciples and paying tribute to John the Baptist's fulfillment of his mission, a greater sense of baptism, the fact that Jesus is defining things in Mark for us. He's defining things like church, and baptism, and man, and repentance, and relationship. All of these things are major definitions. But we have to move from the day-to-day approach into the narrative and see this happening in an over all tenor behind the text.

The Sabbath day is an important thing, because what we're supposed to do on the Sabbath day had already been defined by a commandment (Exodus 20:8). We were to keep it holy. Is he going to be consistent or inconsistent with this commandment? We test his every move. "*He enters into the synagogue,*" where worship is going on, "*and he teaches.*"

Mark 1, Verse 22. What he is teaching is so radical that his hearers acted as if they'd never heard this before. How wonderful! That means it's inspired. They didn't recognize in his method anything they were used to

in the scribal method the Bible experts, the teachers of that period. In Jesus' remarks they heard more authority coming across than they had ever heard from the local ecclesiastics.

Now we're going to really see part of Jesus' definition of church. He begins with this preaching that we have heard him do. But his preaching is *never* separate from his practice of what he's preaching.

Verse 23. "*And there in that synagogue a man with an unclean spirit appears.*" Let's ask ourselves, what is he introducing into the environment of what humans have defined as church? He is introducing healing as an appropriate, if not mandatory church activity. As a matter of fact, it has greater priority than the order of service. Everything stops for healing. Despite the fact that the great resistance of the "*carnal mind*," which Paul says in Romans 8:7 is "*enmity against God.*" Mark, in Chapter 1, Verse 24 says, "*Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth.*"

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Is the church of that period prepared for healing? Is it ready to be regarded as a place to remedy health and other problems?

Verse 25. We find Jesus using very strong words, "*Hold thy peace, and come out of him.*" A very imperative command. He uses almost the identical words to still a storm at sea later in Mark 4:39, "*Peace, be still.*" How appropriate! If the message can be used to cure a storm in nature, it can also cure a *mental* storm in human nature. Jesus' methodology links weather problems *and* the mental conflict of humanity.

Verse 26. The unclean spirit is not giving up without a fight. This is warfare. "*When it had torn him, he was convulsed, cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.*" Remember that God is portrayed in Psalms as "*speaking-and-it-was-done.*" So, all of the resistance is of no moment at all in the healing. It doesn't damage the individual even though it tears and convulses because the individual is better than before.

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says, "It is in no sense true that the word and work of Jesus are distinct as two separate functions of his manifestation. '*He-spake-and-it-was-done*,' is the nature of God, and if man in his relationship to God is what Genesis 1 says it is, namely, image, then the image of an original that speaks-and-it-is-done would also have to be able to speak-and-it-is-done."

But it's God's word that we're speaking, because that's what the image is like, God.

Verse 27. "*Authority*" is the point that's raised. It's almost as if religion, as defined by human kind, has come across to us with splendor, with robes, with grandeur, spectacle, but without authority. "*The authority Jesus proves is illustrated by the results.*" This is what spreads Christianity. Not knocking on doors, not even one-to-one that we so reverence, but healing. There's a one-to-one. That news, the good news, the gospel of healing, spreads by itself. Who can hold it in? It's bigger than all of us. It's God's word applied, and capable of being applied.

Verse 28. So, we find that "*his fame spread abroad all around Galilee.*"

Verse 29. He "*comes out of the synagogue.*" He's just established healing as part of his definition of the church. Healing as a regular activity of the church. If we are not witnessing healings, we are not fully within Jesus' definition of his church. "*Coming out of the synagogue, he goes to Simon and Andrew's house,*" one which has apparently been discovered by archeologists in Capernaum.

Verse 30. "*Simon's mother-in-law,*" you have to be married to have a mother-in-law, "*sick of a fever.*"

Verse 31. Notice the church's healing activity is not confined to the four walls we call synagogue or church. That same healing aspect of the ever-presence of God comes into the humble home of Peter and Andrew, "*healing Peter's mother-in-law.*"