

Mark 1:1-2:12

THEME SENTENCE:

Jesus is the promised authoritative King, and his priority is to proclaim the forgiveness of sins

- 1:1 the proclamation of Jesus
- 1:2-3 proclaimed by the prophets
‘the King will come!’
- 1:4-8 proclaimed by John
‘the King is coming!’
- 1:9-13 proclaimed by God
‘the King is here!’
- 1:14-15 the King proclaims

Mark will tell us the ‘good news’ about the promised Old Testament King-like-David

The Prophets promised the coming of a messenger (fulfilled in 1:4-8) who will announce the coming of the Messiah (fulfilled in 1:9-11).

John is that promised messenger (and that’s why he looks just like Elijah in his location, his dress and his message, as promised at the very end of the OT, in Malachi 4:5).

God confirms who Jesus is, commissioning him as both King (Psalm 2:7) and Servant (Isaiah 42:1), and so Jesus is immediately driven by the Spirit into his battling-with-Satan ministry to fulfil Gen 3:15

‘The Kingdom of God’ means ‘God reigns!’ God has always reigned, but the OT looked forward to a time when his rule would be finally established. That time is ‘near’ because Jesus the King has come.

The King’s power

Mark answers the question ‘who is this Jesus?’ by listing ‘The King’s authority ...’

- 1:16-20 ... over people
- 1:21-28 ... to teach
- 1:23-26 ... over evil spirits (and cf 34b)
- 1:29-34 ... to heal
- 1:40-45 ... to cleanse
- 2:1-12 ... to forgive sins

We don’t know what attracted these four to follow Jesus; we do know that when he speaks, they obey.

What makes Jesus’ teaching different for the crowds is his ‘authority’.

Jesus’ preaching confronts evil, silencing evil spirits precisely because he had come to destroy evil, and also to avoid misconceptions about the Messiah jeopardising his mission (as happens at 1:45).

When Jesus heals, it’s comprehensive (no convalescence needed) for ‘all’ (32).

This is not ‘just another healing’. As v44 implies, leprosy in OT makes people ceremonially unclean, and Leviticus 14:1-32 requires a sacrifice of atonement as a cured leper is ‘cleansed’. For those who know their OT, Jesus’ healing of leprosy is a claim that he deals with what alienates us from God.

The scribes are correct in v7, so as Jesus claims to forgive sins (and then demonstrates that in v 10-12), he is claiming for himself an ‘authority on earth’ (10) that by rights is God’s alone.

The King’s priority

When Jesus came, he came ‘preaching’ (1:14-15), and immediately was in the synagogue ‘teaching’ (1:21f). In 1:38 he states this priority explicitly.

- 1:35-39 The King’s priority to preach
- 1:40-45 The King’s priority illustrated [1]
- 2:1-12 The King’s priority illustrated [2]

1:38 seems shocking: Jesus leaves needy crowds clamouring for healings to go somewhere else to preach. But this does make sense. It’s more important that we understand the way of eternal salvation than that we’re freed from suffering, even for a lifetime. That ‘salvation’ is now illustrated:

Jesus cleanses from alienation from God.

(Lest we misinterpret his single-mindedness, this story also makes clear that Jesus was still ‘filled with compassion’ at human suffering, and acted authoritatively to end it. Nevertheless, a direction has now been set for his ministry: in Mark, ‘to teach’ will be applied to Jesus 17 times, and ‘teacher’ 11 times.)

Jesus forgives sins.

(The scribes are right: unless someone with God’s own authority forgives sins, we remain unforgiven.)