

MARK

(from *Written to be Heard*)

Message #1: “The gospel of Jesus” is “the gospel of God”: *the kingdom is near!* (1.14-15)

--First verse of the prologue (1.1-18):

- “*The beginning of the good news [gospel] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (1.1).
--Last verse of the prologue:
- “*Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe-in [embrace] the good news’*” (1.14-15).

Message #2: Increasingly dismal responses to Jesus’s kingdom authority:

- The *religious leaders*, colluding with *political leaders*, plot and finally kill Jesus.
- The *crowds* finally turn on Jesus.
- The *disciples* deny and desert Jesus, as he foretold; they don’t get to hear about the resurrection.

Message #3: Story’ structure is a recurring pattern of responses to Jesus’s kingdom authority.

Rapid-fire vignettes open the story: 12 in just the first three chapters. For example, to begin:

- Jesus challenges fishermen; they respond by following (1.16–20);
- Jesus teaches with power; crowds respond, astonished at his authoritative teaching (1.21-22);
- Jesus casts out demons; crowds respond with amazement at his authoritative teaching (1.23–28).
- 9 more authority-response sequences quickly follow, building for listeners to an explanation in ch. four—the parable of the sower (Jesus and his kingdom news) and soil (varying responses).

The pattern then slows down but remains persistent to the end: this is a story written to be heard as warning. The story simply stops (16.8a), rather than conclude: the disciples don’t get the good news of resurrection!

Message #4: A Pattern of Disciples’ Failing Responses at the Heart of the Gospel (chs. 8-10)

- 3 times Jesus foretells his coming loss of honor and life (and rising).
- 3 times the disciples respond with concerns for their own status and honor, for greatness.
- 3 times Jesus responds with the cure for such normal “*cares of this world*” (parable, 4.19).
 1. Don’t set your mind on “human things” like self-promotion (8.33-35).
 2. Don’t strive to be first; rather, strive to serve—especially the children (9.33-37).
 3. Don’t strive to be great; rather, serve the “other”—all of them (10.43-45).

Message #5: In dying, Jesus’s “blood of the covenant...is poured out for many” (14.22-24).

Mark returns to the good news of God of the promised kingdom to God’s covenant people—its fourth and greatest epoch—and, through Israel, kingdom good news to the world.

Message #6: “*Beware!*” (8.15, 12.38, 13.5, 13.9, 13.33) “*Be Alert!*” (13.23, 13.33)

Mark’s is a “cautionary tale,” a story based on historical events surrounding Jesus that are carefully selected and crafted with specific purpose: to warn but also to encourage.