

MARK

(from *Written to be Heard*)

Message #1: “The gospel of Jesus?” (1.1) is “the gospel of God”: *Kingdom Is Near!* (1.14-15)

“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 *the good news*’” (1.14-15).

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Message #2: All major characters respond to the authority of Jesus and his kingdom news treacherously and traitorously, the disciples most conspicuously.

- “You will all become deserters,” Jesus tells the twelve (14.27)—and they do. End of story (in hiding, they don’t get to hear about the resurrection, 16.8a).
- Only “the one who endures to the end will be saved,” Jesus has warned (13.13).

Response to the authority of Jesus and God’s good news is the pattern and major theme of the whole story. For example, a pattern of 12 rapid-fire episodes begin the story with repetition, *ratta tat-tat, ratta tat-tat, ratta tat-tat*.

- Jesus challenges fishermen authoritatively; they respond by following (1.16–20);
- Jesus teaches with power; crowds respond, “astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (1.21-22);
- Jesus casts out demons; crowds respond, amazed at teaching with “authority” (1.23–28).
--*Nine more episodes* of authority-response follow in quick succession; then, the *the sower parable*, ch 4—about responses to the authority of Jesus and his gospel.

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Message #3: Parable’s “cares of this world” (status, honor) are the disciples’ Achilles’ heal,

the heart of their failure to respond well to the gospel.

--3 times in close proximity (8,9,10), Jesus foretells his coming loss of honor and life, and rising.

--3 times the disciples respond with care about their own preservation of status and honor.

--3 times Jesus responds with the cure for such culturally normal *cares of this world*:

- 1st response, to Peter & all: Totally wrong, setting your minds “not on divine things but on human things” (8.33); rather, *deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me* (8.34-35).
- 2nd response, to all: “Whoever would be first must be last of all and servant of all” (9:33); Jesus embraces a child: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” (9.33-37).
- 3rd response, to all: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (10.43-45).

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

We come full circle, back to the good news of God in bringing the promised kingdom to God’s covenant people, and through Israel to the world—the “many” are those who repent, entering the kingdom, the covenantal people of God. Jesus has been refining the covenant’s law, “teaching with authority”—that of God.

Message #4: No Conclusion! (The story told just stops, (16.8a). *Listeners, Beware!*

--When three women at the empty tomb are told to take resurrection news to the disciples, they “said nothing to anyone,” afraid (16.8a)—end of story. Why?

--Listeners know that the faithless disciples get to hear, and are transformed. But the writer emphasizes for the listener what Jesus admonished his followers: *beware* (4 X’s in

the last section); in ch 13 alone, don't be alarmed, don't worry, endure, understand, be alert, be on the watch (13: 34) and keep awake (13: 35, 37).