

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested,
Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,
¹⁵ and saying,
"The time is fulfilled,
and the kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the gospel."

Now after John was arrested – Mark's Gospel gave a grand introduction to John the Baptizer, noting that his place in the story was prophesied by Scripture. But after John proclaims Jesus' coming and baptizes Him, his purpose has been fulfilled. Mark doesn't mention him again until Mark 6:14ff. at his death. Once again, Mark is sparse on details of John, but this allusion to his arrest with no other details given likely assumes that the reader already knows a lot about it from other sources (like the other Gospels). Mark's greatest interest is not in establishing strict chronology for this event. Based on the other Gospel writers, Jesus and John's ministry did overlap for some time (see John 3:22-30 and 4:1-3). For Mark there are other emphases that he draws out with this brief introduction. First, it shows that John's ministry, as the forerunner, had achieved its purpose. It's not at all that John was a failure; he actually accomplished the very thing he was appointed by God to do. It also shows there is some relation between Jesus beginning His Galilean ministry and John's arrest, but Mark doesn't give great detail beyond that. It is only later that we learn about Herod Antipas being behind John's death and he is the ruler of Galilee, where Jesus is now going (Mark 6:14-16). Mark wants us to see the boldness of Jesus' ministry. When John is attacked, Jesus doesn't go silent, He actually steps into the limelight and picks up where John left off. Although Jesus is not John, there is a level of continuity between the two men and the messages they proclaim. Therefore, this notice about John is also foreshadowing to Jesus' own life. Where John went, Jesus will go too. As the world rejected John, arresting and (later) killing him, so also will it do to Jesus, (Mark 9:13; 10:33; 15:1), and so will it do to all who follow him (Mark 13:9ff.).

Mk. 9:12-13 ESV And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

Galilee – the area around the Sea of Galilee (also called Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) Lake Kineret (Chinnereth) (Num. 34:1, Deu. 3:7; Josh. 13:27; 19:35), or Lake Tiberias (John 6:1, 23; 21:1). In Mark’s Gospel, this is the primary setting for Jesus’ ministry until He goes to Jerusalem (Mark 10). At the end of this Gospel (16:7) and Matthew’s Gospel (28:16), Jesus directs His disciples to go back to Galilee. Culturally, Galilee is quite a mixture of people, both Jew and Gentile. Unlike Samaria which was sort of no-man’s land for Jews (they had a strong and mutual aversion to Samaritans) and Judea which was where good Jews would live, Galilee was far to the north of Jerusalem and a bit more worldly. Yet this is where Jesus did most of His ministry.

Proclaiming the Gospel of God – We’ve already seen “proclaim” in use with John. This is an authoritative message/messenger. The Gospel of God is not a common phrase, used only here and a few times in Paul’s writings (Rom 1:1; 15:16 and 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9) and once in Peter’s (1 Pet. 4:17). It means the Gospel (Good News) about God. Jesus’ ministry begins not with miracles, exorcisms, or even teaching per se, but with proclamation. His Word is preeminent and all take note of what He says. Even at the ending, after Jesus’ is not found in the tomb, the women there are directed back to His Words, “there you will see Him, just as He told you” (16:7). The Gospel is the royal decree connected to the King and His Kingdom. Here though Jesus is both the Message and the Messenger. He is the Good News (the Word) having come in the flesh.

Mal. 3:1 ESV ¶ "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Isa. 52:6-7 ESV Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am."⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Jesus’ proclamation is divided into three brief phrases 1) the time is fulfilled, 2) the kingdom of God is at hand, and 3) repent and believe in the Gospel.



The time is fulfilled – The time being referred to would appear to be the very thing which was anticipated by the prophecies for John/Jesus: the Day of the Lord, the time when God would come for justice/judgment. A new season of history has come, namely, the End of all time. To the Israelites, God's arrival (the Day of the Lord) was supposed to happen as the final act of human history. Jesus is announcing that the End has now come. Contrary to expectations though, the world is still continuing, but in a different sense, it has reached its final goal with the arrival of God Himself. This new era can broadly be called the Messianic age/era for the Messiah (the promised Deliverer/Savior (Gen. 3:15) has come.

The word "fulfilled" is also significant. It reminds us that history has a purpose and a direction. It's not all aimless and with no direction. God is behind all history and He is the one who is in control, guiding and directing it toward His ultimate purpose. In some sense, history is cyclical because history does often repeat itself (human nature really hasn't changed much over time), but instead of simply spinning in circles, think of the circle like the circle of a wheel touching the road, it is being propelled forward even as it spins around and around. The goal of history is ultimately driven by the promises of God, that He will one day rule over all things and put sin, death, and Satan away forever. This He does through His Son Jesus. But the greatest part of this Good News is that we are invited into that rule, the kingdom of God, by grace through faith in Jesus alone. In Matthew's Gospel the theme of fulfillment is all over as he constantly refers back to Old Testament Scriptures to explain how Jesus is fulfilling those promises/prophecies of God. This helps to assure us that Jesus is the One we have all been waiting for and He is acting on behalf of God.

The kingdom of God is at hand – At first glance, Jesus' words proclaim not just a revolution, but declare a victory. Politically-speaking, to speak of a kingdom in a place that is already ruled and governed by another (in this case, the Roman Empire ruled by its Caesars), is the definition of treason. However, it is those other rulers of other kingdoms that are in the wrong. There is, was, and always will be only one real King and all other kings must pay homage to Him. At this time, many of the Jews would have welcomed Jesus' message, not for its theological, but for its political significance. They did not want to be subjects of godless rulers. They were desperate for counterclaims against this foreign rule to be victorious.

Many scholars prefer to refer to the kingdom of God as God's reign, which emphasizes that Jesus is not merely talking about a geographic kingdom (a place or realm), but God's active reign and rule, God's power is now coming upon them in and through Jesus who is the Son of God. Others foretell that God's kingdom is coming, but Jesus' message is that it is now here. But the big question will be, what does God's rule look like? Will He rule like other earthly rulers? No. The true King of Kings comes both with power and grace and people should welcome Him as such. Jesus, however, will be questioned severely by doubters because what they perceive doesn't look like God's reign. Yes, people are healed, but not

everyone, the blind have their sight restored, but not everyone, He does raise the dead, but not all people. The theological language for understanding this is that Jesus' coming is real, but not complete or final. It is proleptic or a foretaste of His final coming. Jesus' final coming is the Last Day that all are to prepare for (Mark 13:32). So Jesus does indeed bring the fruit of God's kingdom, but it is only the firstfruits of a greater harvest to come. In the meantime, we are all given an opportunity to enter into this kingdom before that final day when it will be too late. One could rightly say that the whole story of Scripture is about how God is King, despite every attempt to subvert His rule.

Another way of thinking about this phenomenon is that Jesus is the complete fulfillment of God's Kingdom, both as the Ruler and the ruled (Son of God and son of man). He is the Messiah and receives the Holy Spirit, receiving the blessings of the new creation. He is hailed as the Davidic king as He enters Jerusalem. He will suffer and die, but He will be raised on the third day. God's judgment will fall on Him, but He will be vindicated. The earth will grow dark (Mark 15:33) at His death and He will be forsaken by God (Mark 15:34), but He will rise just as He said (Mark 16:6).

Repent and believe in the gospel – What must be done in the fact of God's rule coming to us who are by definition His enemies? The answer is perhaps too simple, and yet it is all there is to do: Repent – turn away from your sin/darkness/rebellion/etc. and turn to God. This is how John also prepared the people for Jesus' coming. In turning to God, what more must we do? Nothing more need be done other than to believe/accept/trust His Gospel, the Good News that God's kingdom is here for you too, that God wants you in His kingdom, not outside of it. The fact that Jesus' coming now is not His final coming has allowed them all an opportunity to repent and believe once more. Yet even these acts of repentance and belief are not acts of our human hearts, but a sign of God's presence and the work of His Holy Spirit in us. Rebels do not simply lay down their swords and bow down to the one they have fought against. It is God's act of forgiveness, His grace and His love that prompt these actions in lives that have been changed by Him.

Acts 2:37-39 ESV Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Acts 16:30-31 ESV Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."