



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

GOD'S BIG IDEAS

SESSION 1

THREE NEW TESTAMENT 'STREAMS'

- Synoptic: Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke + Acts
- Pauline:
 - Main themes in seven letters (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon)
 - Variations in six letters (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Titus, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy)
- Johannine: Gospel and Letters of John

Plus six other texts: Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, Jude, 2 Peter, Revelation

THE SYNOPTIC 'STREAM'

- Not the first New Testament books to be written
- But tell the story of Jesus and the first Christians
- Mark's Gospel:
 - First to be written
 - Source for Matthew and Luke
 - Common and basic themes

1. THE AGE OF FULFILMENT

A historical framework for understanding Mark's story:

In the mission of Jesus, climaxing in his death and resurrection, the eschatological (last) age has begun, and the promises of the Old Testament scriptures and the hopes of Israel are being fulfilled. These events happen according to the set purpose of God.

1. THE AGE OF FULFILMENT

Key concepts:

- The last days
- Promise and fulfilment
- The purpose of God
- The work of Jesus
- Jesus' death and resurrection

2. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

God's eschatological (end-time) saving rule

- Liberation of God's people from evil, sin and death
- Associated with the age to come
- Launched in the mission of Jesus

2. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John the forerunner

Jesus inaugurates the kingdom through:

- Prophetic preaching: forgiveness, fellowship, following
- Teaching: nature of the kingdom, demands of discipleship
- Mighty works: deliverance from Satan, provision for need

Other narrative features confirm the kingdom's coming

2. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- God's saving rule is surprising
- It grows very large from small beginnings

3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

The Christ or Messiah:

- Promised king from David's line
- Appointed by God as agent of the kingdom

3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

The son of God:

- Called by God to his distinctive role
- Uniquely related to God as Father
- Possesses divine attributes
- Anointed by and pouring out the Spirit
- Assisted by angels and opposed by evil powers

3. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

The son of man:

- A human being exercising God's authority on earth
- An exalted figure who is coming in glory to judge and save
- Effects redemption through death and resurrection

4. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- Basis on which God's kingdom is established
- Redemptive sacrifice establishing a new covenant
- Ransom delivering his people from evil and sin
- Promise to go ahead of the disciples to Galilee

5. THE RETURN OF JESUS

- Jesus will return imminently, in power and glory, to cleanse the world from evil
- Preceded by signs / birth pains of the coming kingdom
- Associated with the fall of the Jerusalem temple
- Possibility of significant delay; gospel to be preached to the nations

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Jesus will baptise with the Spirit
- The Spirit descends on him and sends him out
- He casts out demons by the Spirit
- The Spirit will speak through his persecuted disciples

7. REVEALING THE KINGDOM

- Jesus is reluctant to be known as *Messiah* and son of God
- The kingdom is revealed to those willing to receive it...
- ...and concealed from those who are unwilling
- Only when Jesus returns will it be disclosed to everyone

7. REVEALING THE KINGDOM

- Jesus' disciples have privileged access to his revelation
- But they fail to grasp his identity and work...
- ...or the demands of discipleship
- These can be properly understood only in light of his cross and resurrection

8. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

The kingdom cannot be confined within the norms of Judaism:

- Jesus reinterprets or overrides parts of the law
- His death terminates the sacrificial system

Jesus' ministry provokes conflict with Israel as a whole:

- His antagonists set themselves against God
- But their response is also divinely ordained

8. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

Israel's rejection of Jesus leads to the reconstitution of God's people:

- Jesus rejects the Jewish leaders' teaching, practice and authority
- Their rejection of Jesus brings judgment on them, the temple and the nation
- God's people are redefined in terms of relationship to Jesus
- Their life is now grounded on the gospel and a positive response to him

8. ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

- Jesus preaches the kingdom first and primarily to Israel
- But some Gentiles share in its blessings, or recognise / believe in Jesus
- Anticipates preaching of good news to all nations

9. DISCIPLESHIP

- Basic response to the kingdom is repentance and faith
- Requires lifestyle appropriate to the eschatological age and kingdom of God
- Defined by Jesus' death and resurrection
- Basic ethic is love of God and neighbour; measure of greatness is service
- Includes constant readiness for Jesus' return

10. MISSION

- Calling and sending out of twelve apostles on mission
- Anticipation of gospel preaching to the nations, and witness before rulers
- 'Following' Jesus includes participation in his mission

APPLICATIONS

- Anticipate visible and significant transformation through Jesus
- Maintain balanced view of Jesus; recognise that release from evil remains incomplete in the present
- Follow the way of the cross as the way to experience the kingdom's blessings
- Do not readopt Jewish practices made obsolete by Jesus' coming