

Gospel of Mark 2 :- Call of the Disciples and the Beginning of Ministry – Chapter 1, verses 14 – 28

We need to remember that Mark is very selective in content he feels is important for believers. As we come to the record of the “call of the disciples” in this Gospel, note that this was not their first meeting with Jesus – read John chapter 1, verses 29 – 51. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and John himself pointed him and his companion (John himself? – if so these verses in John’s Gospel are a personal account!) to the Lord Jesus Christ as “*the Lamb of God*” (John 1, verse 36). The Gospel of John goes on to say that Simon Peter was introduced to Jesus at the same time. (John 1, verses 40 – 42). Philip and Nathaniel (Bartholemew? - *Bar-Tolomaios* may have been his surname = *Son of Tolomai*) met with Jesus “*the next day*” John 1, verses 43 – 45.

Mark chapter 1, verses 14 – 15:- The public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ began, according to Mark, after the imprisonment of John the Baptist. The preaching of John had aroused an expectation of the coming of the Messiah. The authorities wondering if John himself was ‘the Christ’. (Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 19 – 27). Luke chapter 3, verse 15 notes that “*the people were in expectation . . .*”. In Mark, when Jesus said “*the time is fulfilled . . .*” would he be thinking about the prophecy in the Book of Daniel chapter 9, verse 25? This seems to point to the coming of “*an anointed one*” 480 years after the “*word to restore and build Jerusalem*”. The Decree of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah chapter 2, verses 7 – 8) was in the year 440 B.C. By the time of the ministry of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus there was an expectation that the Messiah was due to come and free his people. It is worth reading the Benedictus (Luke chapter 1, verses 68 - 79) with this background in mind. The kingdom of God was already being inaugurated in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ – see Matthew chapter 12, verse 28 and Luke chapter 17, verses 20 – 21.

Chapter 1, verses 16 – 20:- As we have seen, the first disciples had already encountered the Lord Jesus during the preaching of John the Baptist. The call of the Lord in these verses is a call to mission. Notice that the word “*immediately*” - “*straight away*” comes twice in these verses. In verse 18, it implies that Simon and Andrew dropped everything and followed Jesus. In calling James and John, the Lord did not hesitate, he had already spent time with them – see John chapter 1, verses 37 – 39. These first disciples (Simon Peter, James and John) became the ‘core group’ of the twelve – those closest to Jesus; see for example Luke chapter 8, verse 51 and chapter 9, verse 28.

Chapter 1, verses 21 – 28:- These verses mark the beginning of a ‘preaching tour’ in Galilee beginning in Capernaum which was the home of the first disciples called by Jesus.

Verse 21: – as a faithful Jew Jesus attended his local synagogue on the Sabbath Day. It was the custom to invite qualified persons to teach.

Verse 22: – He taught as one with authority! The word “*astonished*” is forceful; meaning “*to strike with intense amazement*”. The scribes taught by quoting past sources from the prophets and other rabbis. Jesus brought a word of authority direct from God, his heavenly Father.

Verses 23 – 26:- Here we have an encounter between the Lord Jesus, who had already overcome the temptations of Satan himself, and one of his demons. As soon as Jesus began to teach, his authority was recognised by “*a man with an unclean spirit*”. This would be supernatural knowledge imparted by the demon.

The command “*be silent . . .*” is again a forceful command, literally “*be muzzled!*”. At this point in his ministry, the Lord Jesus was not seeking publicity! However, the dramatic healing of the man, with “*the unclean spirit convulsing him and crying with a loud voice . . .*” was a demonstration of the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 27 – 28:- This authority was reluctantly recognised by those present and “*immediately his fame spread everywhere . . .*”

Some thoughts and questions?

Those first disciples were busy with their everyday jobs – working to feed their families, responsible for their (elderly?) parents! And yet they dropped what they were doing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

How far are we ready to change our way of life?

Are we in the place where the Lord wants us to be?

Are we doing what He wants us to do at this present time?

The answer may be “yes” to all the above! The only way to know is to continually bring our lives to the Lord in prayer. To listen for His word through reading the Bible and the advice of others.

It is relatively easy to pray for workers in God’s harvest field (Matthew chapter 9, verses 37 – 38). What is far harder is to be willing to pray “Here I am, use me as you will!”