

# 'Jesus Came Into galilee.'- Mar 1:14

by G. Campbell Morgan

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*Jesus begins His public ministry in Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and calling His first disciples to be 'fishers of men'.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 50:4-7, Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:14-35, Luke 4:18-19, John 3:16

**Topics:** "The Kingdom of God", "Jesus' Authority"

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## Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the significance of Jesus' ministry beginning in Galilee after John the Baptist's imprisonment, marking a shift to a more public proclamation of the Gospel. He highlights Jesus' call to repentance and belief, underscoring the urgency of the Kingdom of God being at hand. The sermon details Jesus' early ministry in Capernaum, where He taught with authority, healed the sick, and called His first disciples, demonstrating His commitment to restoring both spiritual and physical well-being. Morgan illustrates the importance of Jesus' communion with God, showcasing His reliance on prayer as a source of strength and guidance. Ultimately, the message conveys that Jesus came to save and restore humanity, inviting others to join Him in this mission.

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## Transcript

Mar 1:14-35.

LIKE Matthew and Luke, Mark commenced the record of the ministry of Jesus, at the point where He left Judaea-John being imprisoned-and in Galilee began a more public and positive propaganda.

Between the thirteenth and fourteenth verses in the first chapter of this Gospel we must allow for the passing of a year, during which our Lord wrought His first signs, and uttered His first teaching, travelling between Judaea and Galilee. The signs were wrought in Galilee and in Jerusalem, but the teaching was chiefly given in Judaea during that period. This year Dr. Stalker has fittingly described as "the year of obscurity." The record of it is found only in John.

The first two verses of this paragraph (Mar 1:14-15) constitute an introduction to the whole period from the arrival in Galilee to the hour of the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi; an introduction to that period of the ministry which Mark records in the first eight chapters of the Gospel; a period in which our Lord probably never went to Jerusalem, but remained itinerating in Galilee, making Capernaum the base of His operations. The rest of the paragraph (verses 16-35) [Mar 1:16-35] gives some incidents of the first days of His public ministry.

Let us then survey the paragraph, and observe the Lord at His work.

The first matter which arrests attention is the time at which Jesus left Judaea for Galilee. It was the hour in which John was "delivered up." The great herald of Jesus had fulfilled his ministry. In a certain sense a year before this time, in pointing to Jesus as the coming One, the latchet of Whose shoes he did not count himself worthy to stoop down and unloose. But he had evidently continued his; work of proclaiming the nearness of the Kingdom, and of calling upon men to repent. There came an hour when he was arrested by Herod. His voice therefore was silenced; his public ministry was entirely at an end. At that hour, Jesus moved from Judaea into Galilee, into the district of Herod; not escaping from danger, but moving into the danger zone; not withdrawing Himself from peril because John was arrested, but going into the very region over which the man who had arrested John was reigning. Men may silence the voice of a prophet; but they cannot hinder the Word of God.

The next matter of importance is the declaration that He went into Galilee "preaching the Gospel of God." Observe the change in the Revised Version; not "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God,

Then Mark proceeded to give the content of the Gospel, and the terms of Christ's appeal. "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand." That, in brief, is the whole content of the Gospel of God which Jesus came to proclaim. The time is fulfilled; the preparation is complete; the last thing that must necessarily be done before the Gospel can be preached is done. The Kingdom is at hand, brought to men, made nigh, made possible.

Upon the basis of that Gospel He made His constant appeal, which was twofold. First, "Repent ye," literally, think again, change your mind! Deal with the inspirational centers of life, by changing the conceptions. Think over again. There is no suggestion of sorrow in this word. I admit that no man will repent in the way suggested by this word without feeling sorrow sooner or later. There is another word for repentance that does include sorrow, but that was not the word Jesus used here. It was not the word used by John. This word was one that called men to think again, to change their conceptions, out of which all conduct proceeds, which conduct issues in character. Repent! Think again!

Repentance was the message necessary to the establishment of the Kingdom; but there was more in the Gospel, and the final appeal was not to "repent," but to "believe in the Gospel.

That was the key-note of His preaching throughout;-good news; the Kingdom of God is at hand; it is made available to men; and the appeal consequent upon good news was ever, repent, think back toward that Kingdom, readjust life by setting it in true relationship with that Kingdom; and then rest in this. Gospel, that what men thus choose to become, is made possible to them.

That introductory passage strikes the key-note of all the music that is to follow in the teaching of Jesus; it focusses all the glory of the light that is to flash upon the pathway, and flame through every activity of this anointed Servant of God, in the days of His flesh.

Before surveying the incidents that are recorded in the following paragraph, it is well to remember that an incident here occurred on the way to Capernaum which only Luke records. Jesus went to Nazareth, and into the synagogue with which He had been familiar from boyhood. There, taking up the roll of the prophet Isaiah, He read those remarkable Messianic words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me." In the synagogue of His boyhood, among the people most familiar with Him in the flesh, He spoke words of such grace that they were filled with wonder; and yet they attempted to murder Him.

Leading Him to the brow of the hill, they endeavoured to cast Him down headlong. He moved away from them in mystic, strange, startling power, and escaped.

On His way into the city of Capernaum, passing by the seashore, the place of the boats of the fisher-folk, He called four men to Himself; Simon and Andrew, James and John. They knew Him; they had met Him at least a year before, and for some weeks, if not months, had travelled with Him; until at Samaria He had dismissed them to their own folk, and had gone back alone to Jerusalem. Now He called them, and said this significant thing to them: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Thus He came to Capernaum.

Then Mark recorded, in his own characteristic style, the story of the first Sabbath at Capernaum (Mar 1:21-35). It is an account of what Jesus did in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. In the morning He was in the synagogue; in the afternoon He was at home; in the evening He was in the streets outside His home.

In the morning He went to the synagogue. One can imagine that synagogue service in Capernaum, with its liturgy, its reading of the Benedictions, its chantings of hallelujahs; the reading of the portion of the Torah or Law appointed for the day; and then the reading of the portion of the prophets appointed for the day. Finally Jesus taught. There is no record of what He said, but we have heard the key-note. He was preaching the Gospel. Speaking of the Kingdom of God, He told them that it was nigh, at hand; and appealed to them to believe in that Gospel. That service was suddenly disturbed by a man possessed of an unclean spirit crying out: "What is there to us and to Thee?" "Art Thou come to destroy us?" "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus turned, and said to him, quite literally, "Be muzzled, and come out of him"; and at once the evil spirit came out. The crowds were amazed, and said, "What is this? a new teaching!" His teaching was thus emphasized by His power. So passed the morning, in teaching and healing.

The afternoon was passed at Simon's house; whither He went with Simon and Andrew, James and John. Immediately on arrival they told Him of Simon's wife's mother who was in the grip of a fever. Jesus, went to her, and raised her up, and the fever left her. Those who have had a sick one in the home can imagine that afternoon, when the woman who had been in the grip of a burning fever and all had been troubled about her, was once again busy about the house ministering to them!

The fame of that morning of teaching and healing spread throughout the city, and the multitudes gathered, carrying sick people, round about that door, and bringing demon-possessed men and women to be healed. Jesus went out, and healed many, casting out demons. The day being ended, He went to rest.

Early in the morning, while it was yet dark, Jesus rose from rest with great quietness, not to disturb the other sleepers; and leaving the house and Capernaum, climbed one of the wild desert heights outside the city for prayer.

These are the incidents. Let us now look at Jesus, carefully observing Him at His work. Four view-points are suggested. First, taking into account that early incident at Nazareth to which Mark makes no reference, we see Him facing His work. Journeying on from Nazareth, we watch His arrival in Capernaum, and observe the calling of His first comrades. Then we see Him in contact with men. We next see Him in conflict with demons. Finally; we see Him, in the early hours of the following morning, in communion with God. When Jesus commenced His ministry, He came to men and identified Himself with them in the baptism of repentance; came to God, and received the attestation of the Father, following baptism; came

to the under-world of evil in temptation, and mastered it. So now He is seen coming again to men as the Servant of God, coming again into the realm where demons held despotic sway over human souls and lives, coming again into quiet, close fellowship with God.

We first observe Him facing His work, when entering into Capernaum He called the disciples to Him. Nazareth had rejected Him. He had come to His own place, and His fellow townsmen would have none of Him. Now work was opening out before Him, and He called four men. The Servant of God, conscious of His rejection at Nazareth, suffering on account thereof, desired the fellowship of men in the enterprises of God. To Simon and Andrew, to James and John, He said, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men," He was the Son of man, the Saviour of men. The master passion of His heart was that of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and nothing interfered with that except men. But in order to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, man must not be destroyed. He said of His presence in the world, "I am not come to destroy, but to save." He needed help.

These were the men He called. Simon, a man impulsive and wayward, lacking the principle which masters passion, and makes it strong. Andrew, His first Judaeon disciple, James and John, brothers, but so different; the one a poet, a dreamer, attractive; and the other quiet, retiring, unknown. To these He said, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

"Fishers of men." He employed this figure because they were all fishermen. To some men He would never say that. He did not say it to all the early disciples. There were others who were farm labourers. Therefore He also said, "The fields are white to harvest." "Thrust in the sickle and reap." He changed His figure according to the men to whom He wished to appeal. The principle underlying His call was that He called men to consecrate to His enterprises the capacity they had. Jesus is thus seen asking for comradeship; indicating the fact that when men are willing, He is able to fit them for the very comradeship in service to which He calls them.

On the Sabbath day, with its wonderful scenes, we observe Jesus dealing with men; teaching and healing. In these days of public ministry He went into synagogues for teaching, as in the earlier years of private life He had gone habitually for worship. The synagogue was the place of the gathering together of those of the Hebrew religion, the Jews who were true to the monotheistic idea, and desired to worship God. The synagogue unified the scattered peoples everywhere, if in no other way, by the very liturgy they employed. Jews in Capernaum, in Nazareth, and in all the cities, who could not reach the Temple, gathered at the same hour on the Sabbath day, using the same forms of worship.

A study of synagogue worship is a very interesting and profitable one. In passing we may observe that they who thus worshipped were forbidden to turn to the east. These synagogues usually faced the west, not only because, according to Ezekiel's prophecy, there was a danger of idolatry in turning to the east, but also symbolically they were thus taught not to look in worship toward the place from whence religion came, but toward the place to which religion was intended to reach. It was the missionary attitude. Jesus went into these synagogues, and conformed to their habit and worship, as He had done through youth and young manhood in Nazareth. But now He went to teach. Opportunity to do so was undoubtedly offered Him everywhere, in accordance with the custom of the time, for all Rabbis travelling were welcome to teach in the synagogues. He employed the opportunities which the synagogue and its assembled people offered, to preach the Gospel.

That which specially arrests our attention was the effect produced. Here at Capernaum, after the first Sabbath teaching, they were astonished, because He taught them with authority, and not as the scribes. The contrast is a very striking one in that it is unexpected. It is made here, and again later on. It is the contrast between Christ's teaching, and the teaching to which the people had been accustomed. He taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes. Now the scribes were the authoritative teachers. Their position was that of authority to teach the law and interpret it; to explain the Kingdom, to emphasize and insist upon the fact of the rule and reign of God, and to show how that rule was applied. The contrast was not between what they said, and what He said. It was a contrast between the effects produced by what they said, and by what He said. I do not agree with Edersheim when he suggests that the authority of Jesus was that of manner. Not that His manner lacked dignity. I believe that physically Jesus was the most beautiful Man Who ever walked this earth. Marred with sorrow was His face undoubtedly, but far more perfect in form and feature than the highest dream of Greek sculptor ever led men to imagine man could be. His authority was not in His manner, nor in the thing He said; for He said nothing that had not been said before He came. Everything that He said may be found in germ in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Then wherein lay this authority? In the thing He said, as He said it, for He carried to the souls of men conviction that it was true. Stripped of all the things that hid, and all exposition that destroyed; the truth gripped men. It was not the authority of the law, it was not the authority of a manner, it was the authority of naked, eternal truth, uttered through an absolutely perfect Man. That is the authority of Jesus until this hour, and nothing is more marked than the continuity of that authority. Take some passage from His teaching, out of the Manifesto, or some casual word He spoke, and listen to it, and then ask this question, Is that true? The only criticism ever offered of the teaching of Jesus worth any consideration, is that He gave men counsels of perfection, that His teachings were impracticable. There is no question as to their accuracy, or their truth. The hearts of men always respond to the truth. His was, and is, the authority of eternal, naked truth, from which there can be no escape. Some of the things He said search and scorch us. We want to escape, but we know that He is right. This is one of the supreme proofs of the finality of Jesus. His authority is authority to the end of time. Only it must be remembered that the authority diminishes, if these records be lost. The authority of Christ is not the authority of what we think of Christ, for to-morrow we may think differently of Him. It is always the authority of the actual words so marvellously preserved for us; and never wholly apart from them is Christ authoritative to-day.

As we watch Him on that first Sabbath day, this authority arrests us; it is the authority of essential truth, coming out of eternity, and appealing to essential humanity; however humanity may have become blunted and dwarfed, it hears and knows the voice, and recognizes the authority.

Then beyond the teaching, there was healing. This healing ministry was twofold;-mental healing in His dispossession of those who were mastered by evil spirits; and bodily healing in His renewal of all bodily powers. These miracles of Jesus were not violations of natural order, but restorations to natural order. That man demon-possessed, was unnatural. Then said Jesus to the demon, "Be muzzled, and come out." That woman in a burning fever, was unnatural; "He touched her, and the fever left her.

Thus the Servant of God is seen moving out upon the pathway of service; first teaching men, for this is supreme, and touches the spirit life; and then healing mind and body, restoring natural conditions, in order to the fulfillment of life.

The last thing in this paragraph is full of beauty. To take the Greek words as they come: "And very early, while yet night, having risen up, He went out, and departed into a desert place, and there was praying."

That reveals the deliberate purposefulness of Jesus. The word "praying" here connotes far more than asking. It suggests the going forward in desire to God, not for God's gifts only, but for God. It is the word for true worship, the word that describes the soul moving out toward God, desiring Him, and all He has to give.

It is impossible to read that statement and observe our Lord in the early hours of the morning, leaving behind Him the four men He had chosen as comrades, and the people He had healed in the city, to go into the desert place, without asking the nature of His communion with God. This Gospel has been introduced by the declaration that it is "The beginning of the Gospel" according to Isaiah. In the second part of the great prophecy of Isaiah, there is one paragraph which lights up this early morning hour, and Jesus at prayer. It is taken from the description of the Servant of God (Isa 50:4-7). "The Lord Jehovah hath given Me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord Jehovah hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Jehovah will help Me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame." That passage suggests the nature of that early morning hour of communion. Let us ponder it carefully.

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