

ON THE MOVE WITH JESUS

IN MARK

(DAY 4)

*A unique, verse-by-verse,
life-application commentary
by Terran Williams*

DAY 4 – GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW, PT 2 (1:14-15)

COLOUR-CODE SUMMARY (THE FOUR MAIN WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE GOSPELS):

- **Blue** - something about Jesus' uniqueness and Lordship that shows he is worthy of our devotion, trust and surrender
- **Green** - something about Jesus' character or ministry that we can imitate
- **Red** - something Jesus taught that we can understand or apply to our lives
- **Orange** - insights we can apply based on the way various people responded to him

Jesus announces the good news

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

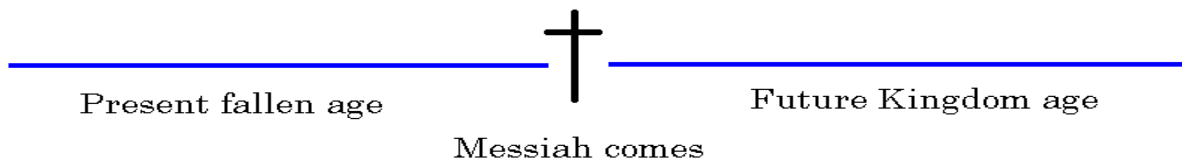
God is doing something new, but it will only be completed in the future.

- Note that Jesus didn't say, "The kingdom of God has fully arrived." By using the phrase "at hand" he implies that it has only started to come, but much more is still coming. Let's explore this thought.
- Through a study of the Scriptures the Jews would have understood that there were two main phases or ages in history: 1) the present age and 2) the future age.
 - 1) ***The present fallen age*** is marked by rebellion against God, brokenness in every area of life, and by promise.

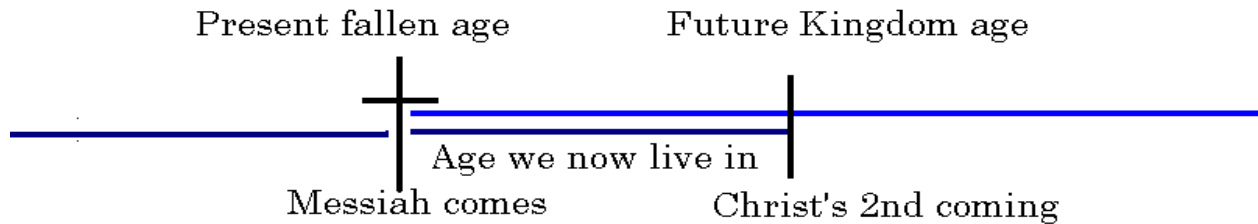
- By “rebellion against God” I mean that people and cultures everywhere don’t know who God really is and, if religious, they merely have a “form of religion but deny its true power”. Therefore, through ignorance about God they live in sin in every aspect of life.
- By “brokenness in every area of life” I mean that there is injustice and corruption politically, divisiveness and hatred socially, sickness and addiction physically, despair and anxiety emotionally, warped ideas and negativity mentally, indifference or deception spiritually, abuse and neglect ecologically and the list goes on.
- By “promise” I mean that since the coming of Abraham God began to speak of a better day for the world, a day when his kingdom would be ushered in. And even before the coming of Jesus this brought the Jewish nation hope when their circumstances were dire.

2) *The future kingdom age* is marked by true worship of God, wholeness in every area of life, and by fulfillment.

- By “true worship of God” I mean that people and cultures everywhere would come to know who God really is, and that they would live for his glory, and according to his direction.
- By “wholeness in every area of life” I mean that there would be justice and integrity politically, unity and love socially, health and freedom from addiction physically, joy and peace emotionally, clarity and hope mentally, passion and reality spiritually, service and compassion ecologically – and so much more!
- By “fulfillment” I mean that all the promises would be fulfilled, and instead of having to look to the future for a better day, people would be able to enjoy all God had for them in the present.
- But here is where the Jews of Jesus’ time went wrong: they thought that the Messiah would immediately end the present fallen age, and would immediately replace it with the future kingdom age. Their understanding looked something like this:



- But this isn’t what happened. This was the surprise “twist” in God’s working in the world: Jesus, at his first coming, started the future kingdom age in the midst of the present fallen age. But only at his second coming will he totally end the present age, and fully bring in the future age. In other words, between the first and second comings of Jesus (the time we now live in) we live in an age of overlap. So what really has happened looks like this:



- That is why as Christians we are “caught between the ages”. Through passionate and persevering faith in and obedience to Christ, we already experience “in breakings” of the kingdom in the forms of changed lives, answered prayer, miraculously healed bodies, impacted political systems, renewed minds, renewed cultures and more. But we still live in a world full of sin and brokenness. Not all are healed. Not all prayers are answered. To use Paul’s words, we experience the apparent contradiction of having “access to the treasure of God’s power” even while we live “in jars made of clay” (i.e. in fragile, tempt-able bodies and minds). To use the words of the writer of Hebrews, even though we do not experience *all* of the coming age, we get to “taste” *some* of the powers of the coming age.
- But the Jews of Jesus’ day didn’t understand that there would be two comings, and an overlap of ages. So when Jesus eventually declared himself to be the Messiah, they couldn’t believe it because they had put all their hopes in a Messiah who would liberate them politically from the oppression of Rome. Their wrong expectations blinded them to the fact that the Messiah would come, first as a personal and spiritual Messiah (in his first coming) and then as a political Messiah (in his second coming).

God is doing something new, and you’re urgently invited to get in on it.

- Jesus doesn’t just announce the arrival of the kingdom. He makes it clear that a person doesn’t automatically connect to this kingdom. He says the kingdom is “at hand” meaning “within reach” which is a strong invitation to intentionally and thoughtfully take hold of it, to connect to it. And he tells us how. *First, we must repent.* In this context, this means “a transfer of allegiance from whatever else we were clinging, to a new allegiance to God and his rule’. Jesus was in effect saying, “Give God your wholehearted loyalty. Bow down before him – and his Messiah-king - as your king. Yield yourself to his will. Entrust yourself to his care.” *Second, we must believe the good news.* Such great news could easily be rejected as a fairytale. Or it could be embraced as the truth. Jesus insists that a new age really has arrived on this planet – and it has happened with his own coming – and that we should believe this.
- Here are two analogies of what I mean by “get in on what God is doing in this world through Jesus”.

Analogy one: Electricity had always been present in this world in the form of lightning, for example, but it had also been beyond our reach. Similarly, God has always been king but in some ways his kingdom had been distant from us because of our sinfulness. But then a way was found for electricity to become available to us, and power-lines began to be built through towns. Similarly, Jesus came to make the kingdom of God accessible and available to us. When power-lines were first built in ancient towns, people had a choice to connect their homes to it or not. The choice was theirs. In the same way, we have a choice to connect to God's royal power or not. And, in the same way that life with electricity is way superior to life without it, so life connected to the leadership and royal power of God is superior to life without it.

Analogy two: David was God's chosen man to be king over the Israelites. God chose him as king in 1 Samuel 16:1. But he was first recognized as king by a minority of Israelites in Judah (see 2 Samuel 2:4), whereas the rest of Israel didn't recognize him as king yet. However, his subjects made it clear to the rest of Israel that the time would come when he would rule them too, and that the sooner everyone aligned themselves to him the better. This was their good news: "The kingdom of David is at hand. Give your allegiance to him." They were sure that he would be the best king Israel ever had, and that submitting to him would bring national blessing. People were invited to get in on David's leadership. Just like they said, seven years later he ruled over the whole of Israel (see 2 Samuel 5:3-5). And he ushered them into a golden age. In the same way Christ one day – in the new heavens and the new earth - will rule without rival. But already now his kingdom grows as every new life submits to his leadership and is entrusted to his care. And the message goes out, "The kingdom of God and Christ is advancing. They will eventually rule completely. The sooner you align yourself the better."

- What does this mean for us? Firstly, we need to bow down before Christ, heaven and earth's true king. We need to entrust our lives to his leadership and care. But, once we're happily surrendered to him, our goal as Christians is to so co-operate with Christ that we experience as much of the future kingdom age as we can now, and that we "advance" his kingdom in our times and in our part of the world by bringing heaven to earth. Jesus taught us to live our lives in such a way that "God's kingdom comes, and God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven." Let's plug into his kingdom electricity. Let's spread the word of Christ's inevitable and ultimate reign of the universe. Let's taste the powers of the coming age. Let's not miss out on what God is doing in the world through Jesus, partly and progressively now but fully and climactically when he returns!

