

Urgent Grace

Understanding The Gospel Of Mark

Session 2: Key Theological Themes

Three Key Themes

**The Reign
Of God**

**The
Messianic
Secret**

**The Centrality
Of The Cross**

The Reign Of God

- Single most common topic of discussion for Jesus
- “**βασιλεια του/ θεου/**” (“basileia tou Theou”)
 - “reign of God”
 - “βασιλεια” → cognate noun → “reign” or “rule”
 - “kingdom” isn’t wrong per se, but does present some traps to be aware of

Proclamation Of The Reign Of God

- Jesus' major (sole?) task is the proclamation of the gospel or “good news” of the reign of God (1:14-15, 38)
- Proclamation is a matter of both word and deed
 - Signs that the reign of God has come near:
 - Teaching
 - Healing/Casting out of demons
 - Raising of the dead
 - Crucifixion and resurrection
- Proclamation calls for threefold response: repent, believe/trust good news, follow Jesus

Already But Not Yet

- Both present reality and eschatological hope
 - Never totally fulfilled until the parousia (4:26-32)
 - Present and visible in Jesus (1:15)
- Signs and benefits can be experienced now by those who follow (4:11-12; 10:13-16; 12:28-34)

The Reign Of God And The Cross

- The reign of God is made manifest “with power” in the death and resurrection of Jesus (8:34-9:1)
- Clear implicit connection between forgiveness of sins and the crucifixion (14:22-25)
- The crucifixion is the climactic “point of no return” of the approach of the reign of God
 - * Mark, however, never explicitly explains why this is so

Son Of Humanity/Son Of God

- Why is the secret of Jesus' identity such a big deal?
- Practical suggestions
 - To avoid being overwhelmed by people seeking miracle cures
 - To avoid being arrested before his time
- Mark's repetition of this theme suggests deeper theological significance

“Corrective Christology”

- Mark wasn't trying to persuade people that certain events happened
- Mark was trying to persuade people about how to interpret those events
- Mark's concern is that certain Christologies are inadequate

Examples Of Inadequate Christology

- Miracle Worker (1:40-45, 7:32-36, et al.)
 - Danger is that Jesus will be understood primarily as a miracle worker
 - Miracles must be understood as signs, not as Jesus' primary purpose
- Messiah (8:27-30)
 - Disciples still don't understand who Jesus is
 - Political vs. Theological understanding of "Messiah" (see 15:26)

“Son Of Humanity”

- Old Testament term
- Can mean simply “a human being” (Ps. 8:4)
- Can also mean a divine figure expected at the end of time (Dan. 7:13)
- Mark’s definition: BOTH!
 - Plus a unique nuance:
 - Will be rejected
 - Will suffer
 - Will die
 - Will be resurrected

“Son Of God”

- Mark says it in 1:1
- The Father says it in 1:11, 9:7
- Demons say it in 3:11, 5:7
- No human being confesses Jesus as “Son of God” until Jesus admits it at his trial (14:62) and the centurion at the cross (15:39)

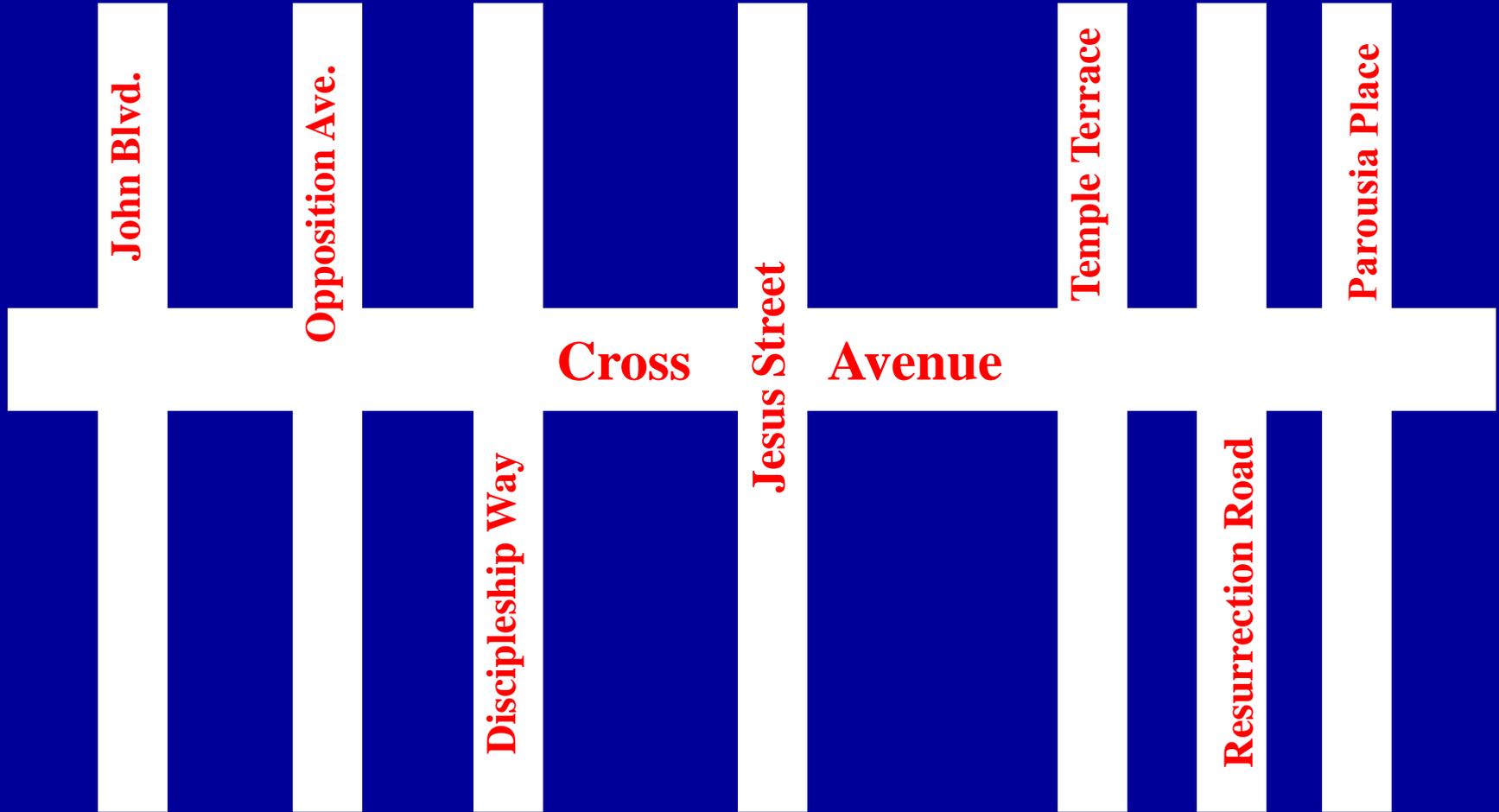
Kingsbury's "Mystery Theory"

- Mystery is not "Who is Jesus?" (1:1)
- Rather, "What does it mean to say this is who he is?" and "How is this made known?"
- Teaching, healings, exorcisms, miracles are all ambiguous (1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:2-3)
- The crucifixion makes it so obvious that even a Gentile pagan can't miss it
- Mark's point: you can't understand Jesus as Messiah and/or Son of God apart from the cross!

The Centrality Of The Cross

- As noted earlier, the Passion dominates the entire narrative
 - Multiple predictions beginning in Ch. 3
 - Narrative becomes much tighter in recounting Holy Week and the Triduum
- This dominance is reflected throughout Mark's theology

Cross Avenue: Mark's Main Street



Mark's Map

- **John Blvd.-** John's life and ministry prepares the way for Jesus, including his arrest and execution
- **Opposition Ave.-** The opposition, present from chapter 2 on, grows in intensity until the climax of the cross
- **Discipleship Way-** The way of discipleship is the way of the cross (including sacrifice, service and the threat of violent rejection)

Mark's Map

- **Temple Terrace-** Power *over* others as exercised by temple leaders collides with power *for* others as expressed in the cross
- **Resurrection Road-** The resurrected Savior is still the crucified Savior
- **Parousia Place-** The one who comes again (the Son of Humanity) is the one on the cross
- **JESUS STREET-** We don't recognize Jesus for who he is unless we see him as the crucified one

Three Key Themes

**The Reign
Of God**

**The
Messianic
Secret**

**The Centrality
Of The Cross**



Three Key Themes

- Themes are both implicit and explicit
 - Exhibited in words *and* actions of Jesus
- Themes are also exhibited in the words and actions of others
 - Disciples
 - Authorities
 - Crowds

Coming Soon!!!

**BATTLE ROYAL:
CONFLICT IN MARK**

For Next Time:

- Read Mark 2:1-3:6
- Fill Out the Conflict Cycle table