

## Fishers of Men

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### Introduction

According to the gospel narrative, Jesus did not truly begin to put his redemptive plan into action until after the arrest of John the Baptizer, at which point he returned to Galilee (Mark 1:14; Matthew 4:12-14).

Matthew sees this return to the Galilee as a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-25; the dawning of a great light upon a land that had been subjected to several hundred years of pagan control.

Jesus called his first disciples to be *fishers of men* (Mark 1:17). Is this appellation a mere reference to their former occupation? For we know that several of these men were fishermen by trade (Luke 5). Mark has already told us that "*The Kingdom of God is at hand*" (Mark 1:15). Could it be that Jesus' choice of words here are somehow connected with the immediacy of the coming kingdom? But what could possibly have been the source of such an association between fishing for people and the coming kingdom of God? The land of the Galilee was supported principally by the fishing industry and so, many believe that Jesus is just employing terms that the local men are familiar with. However, this brief article will show that the calling of the disciples to fish for men is the first indicator that Jesus was executing a precise plan that he had formulated from his understanding of the words of Israel's ancient prophets.

### The Beginning of the Plan

KJV Mark 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: 11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. 14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. 16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, ***Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*** 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

### Setting the Stage for the Redemption

So Mark begins his version of the gospel with the appearance of John. For Mark, the Jesus story begins with John and the baptism in the Jordan. Mark tells us that Jesus is driven into the wilderness, where he remains for forty days being tempted by an adversary. Upon his return from the wilderness, Jesus learns of John's imprisonment and sets out to declare the coming Kingdom of God. The first thing that Jesus does to bring in the Kingdom of God is to select these fishermen and declare unto them their new profession of fishing for men. But where do the prophets speak of the redemption in terms of fishing for men?

## Conclusion

KJV Jeremiah 16:16a Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them;

This passage in Jeremiah 16 describes the scattered children of Israel as fish, which in the first stages of the redemption, will be fished for. This metaphor of Israel being represented as fish is likely hinted at in Genesis 48:16 where the Hebrew word for *multitude* is formed from the root word for fish! According to Mark's gospel, this is the first prophecy that Jesus fulfilled as concerning the promised redemption.

Traces of Jesus' plan have remained hidden from the eyes of those who are unfamiliar with the words of Israel's prophets, but a close study of the New Testament reveals the sure foundation of the task to which Jesus was committed.