

Mark Chapter 6

Verses 1-6: Here begins Jesus' final extended ministry to His native area. His rejection there sets the stage for the mission beginning (in verse 7).

Mark 6:1 "And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him."

"His own country" is doubtless Nazareth (1:9, 24).

"His disciples": This was not a private, family visit for Jesus, but a time for ministry.

We see here, that even though He had not been readily accepted by His family and friends at Nazareth, Jesus came back here from time to time to try to minister. His family in the flesh still lived in Nazareth. Now all of the disciples had joined Jesus, Peter, James, and John who were present at Jairus' house.

Mark 6:2 "And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing [him] were astonished, saying, From whence hath this [man] these things? and what wisdom [is] this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?"

"Sabbath" (see note on 2:23). This implies that no public teaching was done until the Sabbath.

"Teach in the synagogue" (see note on 1:21).

"Astonished": The same word as used in (1:22; see note there). However, here the people's initial reaction gave way to skepticism and a critical attitude toward Jesus.

We have mentioned before that whenever Jesus was near a synagogue on Sabbath, He always preached and taught. Here at Nazareth, all of the people think of Him as just a man like them, because they saw Him grow up in the house of Mary and Joseph. They could not visualize Him as God manifest in the flesh, because they knew Him too well.

I can see a little jealousy in the statement "from whence hath this man these things". You see, a prophet is without honor in his own home town. They surely could not believe these miracles which they had been hearing about were done by this fellow they knew so well.

Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him."

"Carpenter": The people of Nazareth still thought of Jesus as one who carried on his father's trade (Matt. 13:55), as a craftsman who worked in wood and other hard materials (e.g., stones, bricks). The common earthly position of Jesus and His family caused the townspeople to

stumble, they refused to see Him as higher than themselves and found it impossible to accept Him as the Son of God and Messiah.

“Son of Mary”: Only here is Jesus called this. The normal Jewish practice was to identify a son by his father’s (Joseph’s), name. Perhaps that was not done here because Joseph was already dead.

Or because Christ’s audience was recalling the rumors concerning Jesus’ illegitimate birth (John 8:41; 9:29), a man was called the son of his mother if his father was unknown, and were purposely insulting Him with this title as a reference to illegitimacy.

“Brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and of Simon” (see note on Matt. 12:46). These were actual half-brothers of Jesus. “James” was later the leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12), and wrote the epistle of James. “Judas” (Hebrew name “Judah”), wrote the epistle of Jude. Nothing more is known of the other two.

“His sisters”: Actual half-sisters whose names are never given in the New Testament. Nothing is known of them, not even if they became believers as the other family members did.

“They were offended at him”: The English term “scandalize” comes from the Greek verb translated “were offended,” which essentially means “to stumble,” or “become ensnared,” and fall into a sin (see note on 4:7).

The residents of Nazareth were deeply offended at Jesus’ posturing Himself as some great teacher because of His ordinary background, His limited formal education, and His lack of an officially-sanctioned religious position.

Here they were saying, "Who does He think He is? This is the carpenter who worked right here with us." Again, they were saying, how could Jesus be anyone special? They knew His family.

Mark 6:4 "But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."

(See note on Matt. 13:57). Jesus called Himself a prophet, in accord with one of His roles (verse 15; 8:28; Matt. 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 6:14; 7:40; 9:17).

“Own house”: His own family (John 7:5; Acts 1:14).

Not only Jesus had trouble with this, but every minister who ever lived. The problem is that the family and friends see you grow up around them.

Mark 6:5 "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed [them]."

“He could there do no mighty work” (Matt. 13:58). This is not to suggest that His power was somehow diminished by their unbelief. It may suggest that because of their unbelief people were not coming to Him for healing or miracles the way they did in Capernaum and Jerusalem.

Or more importantly, it may signify that Christ limited His ministry both as an act of mercy, so that the exposure to greater light would not result in a worse hardening that would only subject them to greater condemnation, and a judgment on their unbelief. He had the power to do more miracles, but not the will, because they rejected Him. Miracles belonged among those who were ready to believe.

The point is not that Jesus was suddenly lacking in ability to do miracles, He does perform a few. Rather He finds contempt and hardness of heart, which are the antitheses of receptivity and faith. Under such circumstances, further disclosure of God’s presence in His Messiah is denied.

Mark 6:6 "And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching."

“He marveled because of their unbelief”: “Marveled” means Jesus was completely astonished and amazed at Nazareth’s reaction to Him, His teaching, and His miracles. He was not surprised at the fact of the people’s unbelief, but at how they could reject Him while claiming to know all about Him. Faith should have been the response in that town in Galilee, the region where Christ did so many miracles and so much teaching.

“Round about the villages”: The outcome of Jesus’ visit to Nazareth was that He left there and made a teaching tour of other places in Galilee, concluding near where He started (Matt. 9:35).

Only here does Mark speak of Jesus as having “marveled.” Resistance to Him is tragically astounding.

God will not force Himself upon anyone. Our free will gets involved in anything we receive from God. Nearly every time someone was healed, Jesus would say, "Your faith has made you whole." Without faith, very little healing went on. He taught in their villages, and they could take it or leave it.

Verses 7-13: “The twelve” are sent out. From (here to 9:50), Jesus and His followers will minister in a wide area well north of Jerusalem.

Mark 6:7 "And he called [unto him] the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;"

“The twelve” (see notes on 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4). The 12 disciples were by then a divinely-commissioned, recognized group.

“Send them forth”: The form of the Greek verb indicates that Jesus individually commissioned each pair to go out as His representatives.

“Two by two”: This was a prudent practice (Eccl. 4:9-12), employed by Jewish alms collectors, by John the Baptist (Luke 7:19), by Jesus on other occasions (11:1; 14:3; Luke 10:1), and by the early church (Acts 13:2-3; 15:39-41; 19:22). The practice gave the disciples mutual help and encouragement and met the legal requirement for an authentic testimony (Deut. 19:15).

“Unclean spirits” (see notes on 1:23; 5:2).

This was the sending forth of the disciples to minister. Notice Jesus sent them by two's. There is ten times the power with two as with one. The important strength they needed was power to overcome Satan and his demons, and we see that Jesus endowed them with power over all evil spirits.

Mark 6:8 "And commanded them that they should take nothing for [their] journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in [their] purse:"

“Staff”: The walking stick, a universal companion of travelers in those days, which also provided potential protection from criminals and wild animals.

“Scrip” is a knapsack of some sort. “Purse” is a belt.

They were not to carry things with them to live on. They were to be dressed simply and go by two's.

Mark 6:9 "But [be] shod with sandals; and not put on two coats."

“Shod with sandals”: Ordinary footwear consisting of leather or wood soles bound on by straps around the ankle and instep. “Sandals” were necessary protection for the feet in view of the hot, rough terrain of Palestine.

“Not put on two coats”: “Tunics” were standard garments of clothing. Men of comparative wealth would wear two, but Jesus wanted the disciples to identify with common people and travel with just minimum clothing.

Jesus’ commands make His disciples totally dependent on God. No bread, no bag, not even a coin or second “coat” (tunic), to ward off the night chill – all was calculated to make their initial preaching tour an exercise in radical faith.

Mark 6:10 "And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place."

The disciples were to carefully select where they stayed (Matt. 10:11), but once there, the sole focus was to be on ministry. Contentment with their first host and his accommodations would be a testimony to others while the disciples ministered (1 Tim. 6:6).

Mark 6:11 "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

“Shake off the dust”: A symbolic act that signified complete renunciation of further fellowship with those who rejected them (see note on Matt. 10:14). When the disciples made this gesture, it would show that the people had rejected Jesus and the gospel, and were hence rejected by the disciples and by the Lord.

We see that when the disciples entered into a city, they were to pick out a family and move into their home and stay there as long as they were ministering in that city. If the city did not receive the good news of the gospel, they were to shake the filth of the city (dust) off of their feet.

Sodom and Gomorrah were two evil cities destroyed by the Lord in Genesis because of their homosexual activities. We are familiar with the fire and brimstone that fell and destroyed them. Any city which rejected Jesus was in for a similar fate, as we saw in the above verse.

Verses 12-13: “Preacher ... cast out many devils” (compare verse 7). They were heralds of the gospel and had repeated success in expelling evil spirits from people. This demonstrated Christ’s power over the supernatural world and confirmed His claim to being God.

Mark 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

“Repent” (see notes on 1:15; Matt. 3:2).

The message is that of Jesus Himself (1:15).

The most important message of any preacher or church is repent. It is wonderful to be healed and wonderful to be freed of demons; but if you don't repent and be saved, it is all for naught. The salvation for mankind is first and foremost, and then his physical well-being.

Mark 6:13 "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed [them]."

“Anointed ... many that were sick”: In Jesus’ day olive oil was often used medicinally (Luke 10:34). But here it represented the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and was used symbolically in relation to supernatural healing (Isa. 11:2; Zech. 4:1-6; Matt. 25:2-4; Revelation 1:4, 12).

As a well-known healing agent, the oil was an appropriate, tangible medium the people could identify with as the disciples ministered to the sick among them.

Verses 14-29: This parenthetical section on “Herod” is inserted for the following reasons:

- (1) It elaborates on “John” the Baptist’s sudden disappearance from the public scene (briefly mentioned in 1:14), and his death.
- (2) The Baptist’s martyrdom foreshadows one sort of persecution awaiting Jesus and many of His servants.
- (3) The Baptist’s loss of ministry is one reason Jesus dispatches the Twelve in their mission (in verses 7-13).
- (4) It shows Jesus’ fame to be so widespread that it reaches Herod’s court.
- (5) It reveals the world’s blindness to Jesus: while many hold Him in high regard, identifying Him as “Elijah,” a “prophet,.” Or as the Baptist, they do not esteem Him highly enough; they fail to recognize Him as God’s Son.

Mark 6:14 "And king Herod heard [of him]; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

“King Herod heard” (see note on Matt. 14:1). The context indicates Herod heard some exciting news centering on Jesus and resulting from the disciples’ recent preaching and miracle working in Galilee.

“John the Baptist”: The forerunner of Christ (see notes on 1:4-7; Matt. 3:1, 4, 6).

“Herod heard”, perhaps due to the disciples’ preaching.

The "Him" here was Jesus, and because Herod had John beheaded, he believed Jesus was John resurrected. Herod was afraid of John the Baptist while he was alive, but he was more afraid now that he felt he was risen again. Herodias and Herod were living in adultery in John's views, and this statement was why they had him beheaded.

Mark 6:15 "Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets."

“It is Elijah”: This identification of Jesus, which probably had been discussed repeatedly among the Jews, was based on the Jewish expectation that the prophet Elijah would return prior to Messiah’s coming (see notes on Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17).

“A prophet, or as one of the prophets”: Some saw Jesus as the fulfillment of (Deut. 18:15), the messianic prophecy that looked to the One who, like Moses, would lead His people.

Others were willing to identify Jesus only as a great prophet, or one who was resuming the suspended line of Old Testament prophets. These and the other opinions, although misplaced, show that the people still thought Jesus was special or somehow supernatural.

This was the answer Peter gave Jesus, when Jesus asked him who people said that He was. This Jesus Christ was a man of such unusual characteristics that everyone was giving their opinion of who He was. The Jews were looking for Elijah, so they thought this might be him.

Some of these very names are the names put on Him today. Some believe He was a man, a prophet, or a teacher. But Peter had the answer when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". Immanuel, means God with us. God caught up in the body of man.

Mark 6:16 "But when Herod heard [thereof], he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."

“John ... he is risen”: By this excited, guilt-laden confession, Herod showed that he could not forget the evil he had done in beheading John the Baptist and that his conscience had led him to the eerie fear that John was back from the dead (Matt. 14:1-2; Luke 9:7-9).

You see, Herod's conscience had gotten the best of him, and he just knew this was John who had risen from the grave and was here to take revenge on him for the terrible death he inflicted on John by cutting off his head.

Verses 17-29: Mark gives background for readers who might not be aware of the details behind Herod's and John's relationship, and John's eventual fate.

Mark 6:17 "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her."

“John ... bound him in prison”: Herod kept him fettered while imprisoned, probably at Machaerus, near the northeast shore of the Dead Sea. Herod's intention was to protect John from the plots of Herodias (verse 20).

“Herodias”: Herod's niece, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus.

“Philip”: Herod Philip II, another half-brother to Herod Antipas (the Herod in this passage). Therefore, Philip was also an uncle to Herodias (see note on Matt. 14:3).

Mark 6:18 "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

“John had said ... it is not lawful”: The tense of the Greek verb and Mark's wording imply that John had repeatedly rebuked Herod Antipas in private confrontation that his marriage to Herodias was contrary to Mosaic law (see note on Matt. 14:3; Matt. 3:7-10).

Mark 6:19-20 "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:" "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

We can see from this, that Herod had great admiration for John. He actually feared John. Possibly, Herod would have repented and been converted, had it not been for Herodias.

“He did many things”: This indicates that Herod’s interaction with John left him in great internal conflict, a moral struggle between his lust for Herodias and the prodding of his guilty conscience.

Mark 6:21 "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief [estates] of Galilee;"

“Lords”: This term may also be translated “nobles,” or “great ones.” These were men who held high civil offices under Herod.

“High captains”: High-ranking military officials (Greek chiliarchs), who each commanded 1,000 men.

“Chief estates of Galilee”: The key social leaders of the region.

Mark 6:22 "And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give [it] thee."

“Daughter of the said Herodias”: Salome, her daughter by Philip (see note on Matt. 14:6).

“Danced”: Refers to a solo dance with highly suggestive hand and body movements, comparable to a modern striptease. It was unusual and almost unprecedented that Salome would have performed in this way before Herod’s guests (Est. 1:11-12).

Mark 6:23 "And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give [it] thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

“Unto the half of my kingdom”: This was an exaggeration designed to enhance his previous statement of generosity. As a Roman tetrarch, Herod actually had no “kingdom” to give.

Mark 6:24-25 "And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist." "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist."

The use of a “charger” perhaps indicates Herodias’s warped humor on that festive day when she could get even with her husband and be rid of John

Mark 6:26 "And the king was exceeding sorry; [yet] for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her."

“For his oath’s sake”: Herod, as a monarch, felt bound because oaths were considered sacred and unbreakable (see notes on Matt. 5:34; 14:9).

Mark 6:27 "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,"

“Executioner”: Originally meant spy or scout, but came to describe a staff member of a Roman tribune. They served as couriers and bodyguards as well as executioners. Herod had adopted the custom of surrounding himself with such men.

Mark 6:28 "And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

It is really not hard to understand why Herod would feel guilty. Not only did he have John the Baptist killed, but for no reason at all; just to save face with his friends. This Herodias was even more evil than Herod.

Loose promises can get a person in a terrible situation, and that was exactly what happened to Herod. There was no way to take it back, it was done, and Herod would have to live with his conscience. We dealt with this more fully in the 14th chapter of Matthew. You may desire to read more about it there.

Mark 6:29 "And when his disciples heard [of it], they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."

These disciples (in verse 29), were John the Baptist's disciples that buried him in a tomb. Jesus' disciples that He had sent out came back and reported all the healings, deliverances, and preaching they had done. Whether John's death prompted an early return or not, the Scriptures do not say. This had to have stirred them up somewhat, however.

Verses 30-56: Jesus’ influence broadens through additional miracles.

Mark 6:30 "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught."

The “apostles” (here used, most likely, in a nontechnical sense, meaning “ones sent out” or “emissaries”), report to Jesus.

Mark Chapter 6 Questions

1. What was meant by Jesus' own country?
2. Why did Jesus come back several times to His own land to minister?

3. When did Jesus begin to teach in the synagogue?
4. What effect did this have on the local people?
5. Why did the people of Nazareth treat Him as if He is just a man?
6. The statement "from whence hath this man these things" showed they were what?
7. In verse 3, who do they call Jesus?
8. Where is a prophet without honor?
9. What did their unbelief keep Him from doing?
10. What were the only two things He did?
11. What is involved in everything we receive from God?
12. Who did Jesus send out two by two?
13. What power did Jesus give them?
14. What were they to take with them to live on?
15. Where were they to live?
16. What if the city didn't accept them?
17. What did these disciples preach?
18. What is the most important message for preachers even today?
19. Why had King Herod heard of Him?
20. Who did Herod think Jesus was?
21. Who did most believe Jesus was?
22. Who did Peter say He was?
23. Herod believed John the Baptist had _____.
24. What terrible thing had Herod done to John?
25. If Herod was afraid of John, why did he carry out this hideous crime against him?

26. Who came for John the Baptist's body?

27. When Jesus' apostles gathered to Him, what did they report?