

THE GOSPEL OF MARK - PRESENTATION 7

MINISTRY, MARTYRDOM, AND MIRACLES

I. The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6)

A. The "native place" referred to is apparently Nazareth.

B. The people reflect both a prejudice that a prophet must be from a faraway land and a prejudice that a relatively uneducated workingman cannot pronounce the word of God.

C. The lack of reference to Joseph probably indicates he was dead.

- Some argue that it was based on rumors of infidelity on Mary's part, but Mark never mentions this allegation elsewhere. That allegation was apparently a later one created by pagan opponents of Christianity, such as Celsus.

- The "brothers" and "sisters" (adelphoi) were cousins. Matthew describes another Mary as the mother of James and Joseph. See Matthew.27:56

D. The people's lack of faith surprises Jesus.

- Mark emphasizes Jesus' emotions.

- Jesus' inability to perform miracles based upon His obedience to the Father and His mission, which would not have a simple show of power without faith.

II. The Mission of the Twelve and the Death of John the Baptist. (Mark 6:6-28)

A. These two events are intertwined, possibly to show the cost of discipleship is an uncertain world.

B. Jesus tells the Twelve to depend totally on God.

- Taking nothing with them except a staff and sandals indicates a reliance on God, as well as the duty of hospitality, sacred among the ancient Jews.
- Matthew and Luke say that they were not even to take a staff, while Mark records permission to have them. It may be that different instructions were given to the younger and more robust disciples. Or it may be that not taking even a staff was simply shorthand for not taking anything unnecessary.
- Staying only at the first house that would take them also indicates relying on God, rather than finding the house that seems most suitable.

C. They were to go out two by two.

- They would never have a ministry alone, for ministry is always in the context of the people of God.

D. Shaking off the dust of unaccepting towns was an indication that they were to be treated like pagans, albeit in a subtle fashion.

E. The fact that they would preach, cure, and drive out demons indicates that, having relied on God alone, they would act with Jesus' authority.

- The reference to anointing with oil reflects among other things the need for tangible signs.

F. All wonder who Jesus is.

1. Elijah was carried off to heaven in a fiery chariot. 1 Kings 2:91-12 And Malachi prophesied that he would return again before "the day of the Lord." Malachi 3:1, 23. The beginning of Mark applied this prophesy to John the Baptist.
2. The people were desperately hoping that a prophet would return, for the voice of prophesy had been silent for over

400 years since the days of Malachi and Joel. See 1 Maccabees 4:44-45; John 1:21, 6:14.

3. Herod, who was technically a tetrarch not a king, was panicking as a result of his guilty conscience. In the Old Testament, dead prophets never really returned to life. Samuel's spirit returning to tell of King Saul's impending death and the high priest Onias' prayer for his people are the closest analogies. See 1 Kings 28:12 ff, 2 Maccabees 15:12. Thus, even the thought that John the Baptist had returned demonstrates how unique Jesus' ministry was and how confused Herod was.

H. The death of John the Baptist

1. Herod's brother was still alive. What is more, Herod was also the uncle of Herodias, thus complicating the situation even further. Unless a man died without children, his brothers were not to marry his wife after he died. Even that exception was only to provide heirs in the dead man's name.

2. Even imprisoned, John the Baptist has control over Herod and Herodias through Herod's conscience. Because of John's imprisonment at Machaerus, Herod has the banquet in that deserted location, rather than his capital of Tiberius.

3. The taking of John's body and burial of it foreshadows Christ's own death and, by implication, the dangers that all those who witness to Christ would take.

I. Return of the disciples.

1. This even completes the account of the missionary activity and John the Baptist and connects it to the following miracle, the feeding of the 5000, which completes this series of miracles. The next series of miracles, in Mark 6:34-8:13 would again begin with a sea miracle and end with a feeding miracle. Following this series of miracles is the journey to Jerusalem, which begins and ends with the cure of a blind man.

2. There is an emphasis here and in following passages of the need for prayer to be a part of ministry. During the next several scenes, Jesus and His disciples will try to get away for the crowds for some time alone, but they will be confronted with people who need help.