

# The Gospel of *Mark*

## The Servant Leadership of Jesus

### The Servant's Ministry in and around Galilee (cont) (1:14 – 9:50)

#### A Period of Popularity: *Jesus Returns to Nazareth* (6:1-6)

- 1 After Jesus moved His home from Nazareth to Capernaum<sup>Mark 2:1</sup> and served throughout Galilee, Jesus went back to Nazareth, where He was rejected at the start of His ministry<sup>Luke 4:16-30</sup>.
- 2-3 On the Sabbath, Jesus taught in the synagogue<sup>Mark 1:21, 3:1</sup>. The people were amazed at His teaching<sup>Matthew 7:28, Mark 1:22</sup>, as well as His healing<sup>Matthew 15:31, Mark 5:20, Luke 5:26</sup>, but their amazement quickly turned into skepticism and criticism. They thought of Jesus as just a "carpenter".

Normally, Jewish sons are identified by their father's name. Calling Jesus "Mary's son" was clearly meant to be an insult, probably in reference to his rumored "illegitimacy"<sup>John 9:28-29</sup>.

The Greek word translated "carpenter" (*tektōn*) can also be translated: general contractor, including more specific references to a stonemason or a metalworker.

Verse 3 clearly states that Jesus had four half-brothers: James, Joseph, Judas & Simon and at least two half-sisters. Most scholars agree that James<sup>James</sup> and Judas<sup>Jude</sup> were NT authors. However, nothing else is known about Joseph and Simon.

A literal translation of the phrase "they took offense" is "they were made to stumble". Jesus is the "stumbling stone"<sup>Isaiah 8:13-14, Romans 9:32-33</sup> for those "destined" to "disobey"<sup>1 Peter 2:4-8</sup>. However, Jesus said "Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."<sup>Matthew 11:6</sup> Obedience is a character trait that is a direct result of Jesus being a person's Lord & Savior.

- 4 The statement by Jesus<sup>Luke 4:24, John 4:44</sup> exemplified the popular phrase "familiarity breeds contempt". Jesus called Himself a prophet<sup>Deuteronomy 18:15, Matthew 21:10-11</sup>; one of His many important roles. The phrase "familiarity breeds contempt" is attributed to philosopher Publilius Syrus in 2 B.C. America is so "familiar" with Jesus, and yet the country is becoming hardened to the Gospel.
- 5 The statement "He could not do..." is puzzling, because it seems to indicate Jesus is not omnipotent. The key to this passage is revealed in Matthew's detailing of this story. His Gospel states that the scarcity of miracles was due to people having a "...lack of faith." So it appears that Jesus (being a gentleman) will not force His blessings on those who do not want to receive them, either because they are not going to Him or they simply do not believe in Him. God is sovereign, yet He will not violate man's sovereignty when it comes to salvation<sup>Revelation 3:20</sup>.

**6** Jesus responded with amazement to the rejection in His hometown of Nazareth, so He left to continue His teaching in the various villages of Galilee <sup>Matthew 9:35-38</sup>.

There are only two times throughout the Scriptures that Jesus was said to be “amazed” (translated from the Greek word: *thaumazō*). In this verse, Jesus was “amazed” at the lack of faith exhibited by the people of Nazareth, who claimed to know everything about Jesus. The other time, Jesus was “amazed” over the great faith shown by the centurion (who knew very little about Jesus), when he humbly requested for Jesus to heal his servant <sup>Luke 7:9</sup>.

The phrase “lack of faith” (Greek *apistia*) also: unbelief, faithlessness, uncertainty, distrust.

After Jesus and His disciples left Nazareth, Jesus responded to the crowds in the surrounding area with compassionate preaching and healing. During this time, Matthew noted that Jesus remarked to His disciples that the people were like “sheep without a shepherd”, and added “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” <sup>Matthew 9:35-38</sup>. Following this teaching, Jesus gathered “the Twelve” and sent them out as His first “workers” to the people <sup>Luke 10:1</sup>.

#### **A Period of Popularity: *Jesus Sends out the Twelve* (6:7-13)**

**7** Jesus gathered His apostles together to give them the right to use His authority in their ministry.

The Twelve (apostles <sup>Mark 3:13-19</sup>) were by now recognized as a divinely-commissioned group to the larger assemblage of men and women disciples who were travelling with Jesus.

The Greek word for sent (*apostellō*) is the root for the word apostle (simply: one who is sent).

Jesus sent them out two-by-two (the Greek verb indicates He commissioned each pair).

Two at a time is a sensible practice <sup>Ecclesiastes 4:9-12</sup> used by John the Baptist <sup>Luke 7:18-19</sup>,

Jesus on other occasions <sup>Mark 11:1, 14:13, Luke 10:1</sup> and the early church <sup>Acts 13:2-3, 15:39-41, 19:21-22</sup>.

The Bible requires 2 witnesses to establish anything <sup>Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1</sup>.

**8-11** Jesus instructed His apostles to go out into the culture with the belief that He would provide their food and any other needs through the people as they traveled around. He told His apostles to wear ordinary clothes, so they would identify with the common people. Jesus also directed them to stay their entire visit in a city in the first place they were accepted (i.e., not hunt for the best lodgings), and show contempt for any place that would not “welcome” or “listen” to them.

Jesus mentioned specific items to take and not to take:

- The staff was a walking stick used as an aid for fatigue and protection in their long walks.
- The bag was either a leather traveling bag (for clothing, etc.) or a food sack.
- Sandals were ordinary footwear made of wood or leather soles, tied on with leather straps.
- A tunic was standard. The rich wore 2, but the apostles were to relate to the common people.

The act of shaking “the dust off” of feet was a common expression of derision when a Jew returned from travels to a Gentile region. Jesus was directing His apostles to use this visible protest <sup>Acts 13:50-51</sup> to indicate they regarded that place to be no better than pagan land.

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**12-13** The Twelve preached repentance, using spiritual/physical healings as signs God was with them.

Repentance: taught in the OT <sup>Isaiah 59:20</sup>, by John the Baptist <sup>Matthew 3:1-2</sup> & by Jesus <sup>Matthew 4:17</sup>.  
Repentance <sup>Luke 13:3</sup> & faith/belief <sup>Mark 1:15</sup> are necessary & sufficient for salvation <sup>Acts 20:17-21</sup>.

Biblically, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit <sup>1 Samuel 16:13, Zechariah 4, Matthew 25:1-4</sup>. In addition,  
oil is an important substance in anointing the sick <sup>James 5:14</sup> and healing illnesses <sup>Luke 10:34</sup>.

**A Period of Popularity: *John the Baptist is Beheaded by Herod Antipas*** (6:14-29)

**14-16** As the news of the many physical and spiritual healings of Jesus spread, “some” began to speculate who He was. The people said Jesus was “John the Baptist ... raised from the dead”, “Elijah” <sup>Malachi 4:5-6</sup> or “a prophet of ... long ago” <sup>Deuteronomy 18:15</sup>. When King Herod Antipas heard these conjectures, he was afraid Jesus was John the Baptist, because the king had beheaded John.

A similar discussion occurred later among Jesus & His apostles at Caesarea Philippi <sup>Mark 8:27-28</sup>.

When Herod the Great died <sup>Matthew 2:19</sup>, the Romans divided his territory among 3 of his sons. Herod Antipas was made the tetrarch <sup>Matthew 14:1</sup> over Perea & Galilee <sup>Luke 3:1</sup>. John the Baptist rebuked Antipas about his illegal marriage to Herodias, who had been married to his half-brother, Herod Philip I <sup>Luke 3:19</sup>. In these verses, Antipas exhibited anxiousness about Jesus, because of his having beheaded John, but much later his heart seemed hardened <sup>Luke 23:6-11</sup>. Responding to the Pharisees warning about a threat, Jesus called Antipas a “fox” <sup>Luke 13:32</sup>.

For the sake of his Roman audience, Mark utilized the next 13 verses <sup>v.17-29</sup> as a review of the circumstances leading up to the arrest and beheading of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas.

**17-20** Mark began his account of how the death of John the Baptist occurred: Herod imprisoned John, because his wife at that time, Herodias, hated John for speaking out many times against their illegal marriage <sup>Leviticus 18:16, 20:21</sup>. However, Herod did not want to harm John; he secretly respected him.

**21-28** The story continued with Herod Antipas giving himself a huge birthday celebration. During the party, the daughter of Philip I and Herodias (Salome <sup>Flavius Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 18.5.3 136</sup>) performed an erotic dance. Antipas and his guests were so pleased that he, probably in a lecherous stupor, offered her a valuable, open-ended present. At the insistence of Herodias, Salome demanded the “head of John the Baptist on a platter”. Realizing the position he put himself in (saving face in front of his guests), the pride of Antipas forced him to acquiesce, in spite of his desire to protect John.

Herod struggled with an internal moral battle between his fleshly lust and a guilty conscience. America has also lost its moral conscience, because it has ceased to denounce sin <sup>Isaiah 5:20</sup>.

**29** Once they knew John was dead, his disciples retrieved his body and gave him an appropriate burial. Matthew added that once they buried John, his followers went to tell Jesus <sup>Matthew 14:12</sup>.

**Rejection of Jesus comes from those who are close (Nazareth) and those who are far (Herod).**