

**Mark 6:12-30, The Apostles' Maiden Mission: During
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A. Overview

1. Context

- a) 1-11 is their preparation, including a demonstration in the Lord's own village of Nazareth, and verbal instruction.
- b) 12-30 (this week) is their actual ministry.
- c) 31-end (next lesson) is supposed to be a retreat and debriefing, but ends up as a continuation of their work.

2. The Issue: Why such a heavy focus on Herod?

B. 12-13, The Apostles' Activity

- 1. Focused on the three main activities of preaching, exorcising, and healing.
- 2. We have seen these before.
 - a) These were the Lord's original activities: 1:14, 21, 25, 31
 - b) The disciples originally missed the emphasis on preaching, and had to be reminded, 1:32-34, 38
 - c) The purpose of setting apart the apostles is so that they can carry on this work for him, 3:14,15
 - d) Will be the burden he gives them when he leaves, 16:15-18
- 3. So: they're doing what they were sent forth to do.
- 4. More detail on their preaching: their preaching is a preparation for the revelation of the true king, the Lord Jesus. Evidence:
 - a) The message was to "repent." This is a continuation of the Lord's activity in 1:15, and is founded on the claim that "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand."
 - b) Their gospel, like the Lord's, is thus the "gospel of the kingdom of God," 1:14.
 - c) Cf. 4:11, 26, 30; the definitive parables of the soils and seed all are centered around the notion of the kingdom.

C. 14-29, The Herod Parenthesis

- 1. Why is this here? There are at least two reasons, possibly a third. The first two hang on distinctive terms used in the Herod story.
 - a) "King."
 - 1) Mark emphasizes the title "king" for Herod. Matt uses it only once in this story, and Luke not at all, but Mark uses it 5x in this chapter of Herod (vv. 14, 22, 25, 26, 27), 6x

in ch. 15 of Christ, and nowhere else, thus clearly comparing and contrasting the two. Herod Antipas was not an official king, and when he petitioned the Emperor in Rome for this title, he was refused. Why Mark's emphasis on this title?

- 2) The Lord and his apostles are preaching the "gospel of the kingdom of God," which will ultimately be realized by his rule. Thus the opposition against him involves traditionalists not only religiously but politically, the Herodians (3:6 and 12:13), who favored the dynasty established by Herod the Great and now represented in Galilee and Perea by Herod Antipas and in the north-east by Philip (Judaea and Samaria being without Herodian rule). Let us compare the Lord's royal demeanor with the conduct of this Herodian pretender to the throne.
 - 3) In a sense, both Herod and the Lord are kings-in-waiting. The Lord compared himself to a landowner who went into a far country to receive a kingdom (Luke 19:12); when he left the first time he declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), but when he returns, he will rule over the whole earth. When Herod went to claim his throne, he was denied and sent into exile; the Scriptures assure us that the Father is pleased to give his Son the kingdom.
- b) "Send" (*apostolos, apostellw*) (See appendix for full data) The verb that describes the sending of the 12 (6:7; noun form in 6:30) is *apostellw*, from which we get "apostle," one who is sent forth. Mark uses this verb twice of Herod in this chapter: 6:17 (the soldiers to arrest John), and 6:27 (the executioner to behead John). And Mark is the only evangelist to use *apostellw* of Herod in this story! Just as calling Herod a king invites us to compare his kingship with the Lord's, making him a sender of apostles invites us to compare his emissaries with the Lord's.
- c) Timing: Shows God's sovereignty in overcoming man's opposition to his word.
- 1) 1:14, the Lord's preaching is presented as beginning with John's imprisonment.
 - 2) Here, just as Herodias removes John, the Lord's disciples spread out. Mark does not emphasize the correlation, but merely notes that JB is dead when the apostles are circulating. But note from Matt. 14:12,13 that the news of John's death reaches the Lord just as the apostles return from their maiden campaign
 - 3) Thus preachers are like the brooms in the Sorcerer's Apprentice. Every time Satan manages to knock one down, a host of others appears in his place.

2. 14-16, He Heard (cf. 8:28)

- a) This paragraph zooms in from the multitudes who hear the apostles' preaching to one hearer in particular, Herod Antipas.
- b) His response is set in the context of that of the multitudes; compare 8:28.
- c) But his reason for favoring one option over the others is his recent involvement with John the Baptist. Mark unfolds these events to enable us to compare two kings (Herod and Christ) and how they send out servants to do their will. Two sendings by Herod: one to arrest John (17), the other to execute him (27).

3. 17-20, John's Arrest

17 is a summary introduction, amplified in 18-20.

a) 17, Summary: Three points.

- 1) The arrest: "Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John." "Sent forth" = *apostellw*. While the Lord is sending out men to preach, Herod is sending out men to stop preachers.
- 2) The immediate reason: "for Herodias' sake." This king is motivated by the whim of a woman.
- 3) The ultimate reason: "his brother Philip's wife ... he had married." Rooted in his own immorality.

b) 18-20, Amplification:

- 1) 18, Herod's immorality. John no doubt protested the union on two grounds:
 - a> Adultery. Herod divorced his own wife, and took Herodias while Philip was still living; thus the union was adulterous on the part of both parties. Deut. 22:22.
 - b> Incest. Marriage to a brother's wife was forbidden (Lev. 18:16; 20:21; excepting the case of levirate marriage, Deut 25:5-10).
- 2) 19a, Herodias' animosity. She was more upset over John's condemnation than Herod was--to the extent that she wanted to kill John. NB: Herodias here shows the general tendency of women to be more sensitive spiritually than men are. Herod could shrug off the preaching, but she felt its sting, and unwilling to submit to it, must deal with the messenger.
- 3) 19b-20, John's arrest

Four imperfect verbs emphasize the continuing attention Herod paid to John while he was in prison. He was not left neglected, in a condition in which Herodias might do away with him. Yet Herod's attention falls short of a saving response, in ways that we should notice carefully.

- a> "Herod feared John," because John was just and holy. The world recognizes spiritual power, and fears it. We, on the other hand, have nothing to fear from "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Matt. 10:28. So we should be encouraged, not cowed, in our spiritual combat. Yet Herod falls tragically short--if only he had feared God rather than John!
- b> "Herod ... observed him," in the sense of "kept him," "protected him." Herodias couldn't sneak in and do away with him. No doubt Herod felt proud that he had the prophet under "protective custody," even justifying the incarceration on these grounds. Similarly, the world congratulates itself that God must be impressed with how tolerant they are of believers, all the while insulting our God by trying to repress his message.
- c> "Herod ... did many things" in response to what he heard from John. Unbelievers often try very hard to "be good," and think this is the point of religion, not recognizing their utter inability to satisfy God's high standards, and crying out in repentance toward God for mercy.
- d> "Herod ... heard him gladly." He praised John's eloquence, and was intrigued by his message, but taking pleasure in it is tragically inadequate if it does not lead to repentance and faith. Ironically, Herodias was closer to salvation--she recognized that John was not just court entertainment, but presented a life-and-death decision.

c) Comparison with Christ:

- 1) Herod has personally rebelled against the law of God; the Lord is presented as obedient in every detail.
- 2) Herod is spiritually insensitive to the warning that John brings; the Lord submitted to John's baptism and picked up his message after John was imprisoned (1:14).
- 3) Herod sends forth his emissaries squelch the truth; the Lord sends forth his to carry it.

4. 21-29, John's Execution

a) 21-22a, The Setting

- 1) Herod is throwing a birthday party to impress his

subordinates.

- 2) The entertainment is by Herodias' daughter by Philip, whose name is preserved in Josephus as Salome.
- b) 22b-25, The Conversation
- 1) 22-23, The king makes a flamboyant promise. "Half of my kingdom"--he didn't really have any kingdom! But he is acting like a king.
 - 2) 24, the girl is overwhelmed by such an offer, and consults her mother, who seizes the opportunity to trick her husband into what he would never give willingly.
 - 3) 25, note the enthusiasm with which the girl presents her request:
 - a> "in haste"
 - b> "by and by" = "immediately"
 - c> "in a charger," a serving platter--right here, in the context of this feast, as the next course. She may be a "damsel," but she clearly has adopted her mother's heart, experienced in wickedness.
- c) 26-29, The Execution
- Betrayed by his wife and stepdaughter, embarrassed before his princes, Herod sends out an "apostle," the executioner who ends John's life. John's disciples bury his body, and (Matt. 14:12,13) then resort to the Lord, just as his own apostles are returning from their initial mission.
- d) Comparison with Christ:
- 1) Herod is manipulated by his wife and stepdaughter, who ought to be subject to him, against his will. The Lord is willingly and joyfully subject to his Father, as is appropriate.
 - 2) Herod's second "apostle" brings death; the Lord's apostles deliver from demons and bring healing from sickness.
 - 3) In his own eyes, Herod's sending fails; he sees Christ as the resurrected John, so that the "apostles" he sends to arrest and later kill John are ineffective. Christ's apostles succeed in their work.

D. 30, The Apostles' Return

v.30 is the only occurrence of the noun "apostle" in Mark. Their report is chiasmic with Mark's summary of their activities in 12-13, and emphasizes their success, contrasted with the failure of Herod's "apostles."

1. "what they had done"--"they ... cast out many devils, and ... healed [the sick]."

2. "what they had taught"--"they ... preached that men should repent."

E. Appendix: Study of *apostolos*, *apostellw* in Mark (22x in all, in 21 vv)

1. Frequency data: Mark is the most "sending" oriented of the synoptics, and comparable with John.

Book	Total vv	Total ap' vv	verses/ap'verse
Matt	1071	22	49
Mark	688	21	33
Luke	1151	29	40
John	879	28	31

2. Who does the sending, and who are sent? Distinguish "good sendings" (those supportive of the Lord's purposes) with "bad sendings" (those that are intended to oppose his work).

Sender	Sent ones	Refs
	Good Sendings	
God	Prphts, Son, Agls	1:2; 9:37; 12:2p, 4p, 5p, 6p; 13:27
Jesus	Apostles	3:14; 4:29p; 6:7, 30; 11:1; 14:13
Jesus	Demons	5:10
Jesus	Blind man	8:26
Owner	Donkey	11:3
	Bad Sendings	
Mary, bro's	(indef.)	3:31
Herod	Soldiers	6:17, 27
Rulers	Prophets	12:3p, 4p
Priests etc	Pharisees+	12:13

3. Distribution by chapter: ch.6 is second most populous, after ch. 12, which is dominated by the parable of the vineyard. Mark each occurrence by g(ood) or b(ad). Note that the only bad sendings occur in chapters with good ones too; Mark wants us to understand the sending of the 12, and to that end contrasts it with the sending of the world.

1: g
 2:
 3: gb
 4: g
 5: g
 6: gbbg
 7:
 8: g
 9: g
 10:
 11: gg
 12: gbgbggb
 13: g
 14: g

15:
16: