

Gospel of Mark 11 – Chapter 6, verses 1 – 32; Rejection and the Mission of the Twelve:-

The rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ was in many ways a problem for the early Church. The mission to the Gentiles in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles appears to have been very effective. The rejection of the Gospel message by the Jewish people on the other hand is the subject of some concern as shown by the lengthy explanation in the Epistle to the Romans chapters 9 to 11. Again we are reminded of the words in the opening verses of the Gospel of John “*He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.*” (John chapter 1, verse 11).

The Gospel of Mark includes the death of John the Baptist here, to cover the intermission between the sending out of the Twelve and their return.

Verses 1 – 6 :- Rejection in His Home Town:-

This would be at least the second time that the Lord Jesus had come to Nazareth – compare with Luke chapter 4, verses 16 – 30 and Matthew chapter 13, verses 53 – 58. The base of the ministry of the Lord Jesus in Galilee was at Capernaum (Mark chapter 1, verse 21; chapter 2, verse 1 and chapter 3, verses 7 and 20). His ‘preaching tour’ round the villages would include a visit to Nazareth ‘where he had been brought up’. Those who had known him and his background from childhood would naturally be sceptical about his status as a Rabbi let alone the rumour that he was the expected Messiah! The townspeople were “*offended*” - literally “caught in a trap or snare”. They were caught in a snare of their unbelief and stumbled when they could have risen to their greatest opportunity.

The power of the Lord to heal is not questioned! It would appear to be the lack of faith among the local population meant that very few sought for healing. They did not believe and did not come to the Lord.

Verses 7 – 13: – The sending out of the Twelve:-

There are parallel passages in Matthew chapter 10, verses 1 – 15 and Luke chapter 9, verses 1 – 6. This was the first time that the disciples had gone out without their master and it constituted an advanced step forward in their training. There was no ‘taking of a series of courses’ - no set questions to answer to see if they were suitable for the task! They had watched and learnt from their Master, now they were commissioned to use what they had learnt.

Note that they were to be dependent on the goodwill of the people to whom they were sent! The necessity of being open and receptive to the Gospel message is pointed up in verses 10 and 11. The act of shaking off the dust was not one of personal animosity but as a testimony to show the seriousness of rejecting the message of the Son of God.

Verses 14 – 29: – The death of John the Baptist:-

In verse 14 we have evidence that the reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ had come to the attention of government officials. Herod Antipas had inherited the Galilean and Perean portions of his father Herod the Great’s kingdom. This Herod had divorced his first wife in order to marry Herodias, the former wife of his half brother Philip. John the Baptist had incurred the wrath of Herod by repeatedly denouncing the marriage as unlawful. Although Herod himself “*was afraid of John . . .*” (verse 19) and though he had him imprisoned he was reluctant to go further. These verses give us the story of the way Herodias took the opportunity of the birthday feast (another ‘birthday cake ambush’???) to send in her daughter Salome to dance. A rash promise made before witnesses had to be kept and the great John the Baptist was beheaded.

Verses 30 – 32: – The Return of the Twelve:-

The returning disciples report back to their teacher on their experiences. No doubt they were hyped up with what they had seen and done. They would be in need of a rest and ready for some ‘down time’! Note that the Lord Jesus Christ himself needed time in solitude and prayer – see for example Mark 6, verse 46 and Luke 6, verse 12. Often the more pressure there is to be up and doing, the more important it is to spend some time in peace and quietness, especially before taking any important decisions!