

Introduction

1. Christian persecution is on the rise (slide presentation)
2. Today Mark continues his quest by sharing with us two events that reveal Jesus as Messiah, but in a rather unexpected way
 - a. The first is Jesus's rejection by His own people
 - b. The second is the mission and persecution of His disciples

A. Jesus rejected by his own people (6:1-6)

1. After spending the past few months teaching and ministering around the Sea of Galilee, Jesus travels back to His hometown of Nazareth with His disciples (READ 6:1)—we would think He'd receive a warm welcome, but that's where we're wrong:
 - a. The last time Jesus was in Nazareth—one year before this return home--the people tried to kill Him (READ Luke 4:16-30)
 - b. Mark has shared with us in chapter 3 that even His immediate family thought He was out of His mind, enough so that they traveled the 20 miles from Nazareth to Capernaum to take custody of Him and bring Him home (Mark 3:21)
2. Even so, Jesus returns to Nazareth and once again we find Him teaching in the synagogue only to be rejected again (READ 6:2-3):
 - a. It shouldn't surprise us that their response is little different from what it was the first time
 - b. They were initially "**astonished**" as Jesus taught (the imperfect implies an ongoing or continual astonishment)
 - c. Their astonishment was based in two things (2):
 - 1) The content of what He taught: "**Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him,**"
 - 2) And, the reports they had heard about the miracles that He performed in Galilee, "**and such miracles as these performed by His hands?**"
 - d. However, their astonishment soon gave way to being offended (3): "**Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us? And they took offense at Him.**"
 - 1) While there was nothing offensive or derogatory about being a carpenter, they were implying that regardless of the quality and wisdom of what Jesus taught, He wasn't qualified to teach the things He was since He was merely a carpenter (rather than an educated teacher)
 - 2) However, the reference to being the "**son of Mary**" was derogatory:
 - a) It was customary to refer to children by their father's name, even when they were dead (as was probably the case with Joseph by this time)—this is how they referred to Him in Luke 4:22, "**Is this not Joseph's son?**"
 - b) It was likely a veiled reference to Jesus being an illegitimate child (the Jews accused Him of this directly in John 8:41)

- 3) The references to Jesus being the brothers of James and Joses, and the sisters of Jesus being **“here with us”**, is another dig suggesting that there was nothing special about Jesus—He was just like everyone else, a common fellow, with no right to the claims He had made about Himself
 - 4) In some respects, it was their familiarity with Jesus that blinded them to the truths of Who He was (something we saw with His own immediate family)
3. Jesus actually reflects this in His rebuke (4): **“Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and his own household.’”**
 - a. There is an English proverb, “Familiarity breeds contempt” which means that familiarity or close association with someone or something can sometimes lead to a loss of respect for them or it
 - b. Many cultures from around the world have proverbs that convey the same concept, including ancient Jewish and Greek cultures
 - c. In fact, we have a perfect example in the Prophet Jeremiah from the Old Testament—he was probably the most persecuted prophet in the entire Old Testament because he was continually cursed, beaten on multiple occasions, and tossed into prison time and time again --all by his own people!
 - d. So, like the Prophet Jeremiah Jesus Himself was being dishonored and rejected by His own people
 4. The measure of their unbelief caused even Jesus to marvel and prevented Him from performing many miracles there (6-7): **“And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief.”**
 - a. It wasn’t that Jesus technically couldn’t perform any miracles, he did a few, but rather because of their unbelief He limited what He did
 - b. The word for **“wonder”** here reflects the idea of amazement or marveling at something
 - c. Matthew adds this (Matthew 9:36-38): **“Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He *said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”**

B. Jesus sends out the Twelve, but warns them that they too will face rejection and persecution (READ 6:7-13, 30)

1. When Jesus called the Twelve, He said He would make them **“fishers of men”** (Mark 1:17)
2. We see their first assignment here when Jesus sends them out with a set of instructions:
 - a. They were to go in pairs (7)—likely based on the OT condition that a testimony can be corroborated on the basis of two or three witnesses; according to Matthew they were to go only to Jewish regions (not Samaria or gentile areas)
 - b. They were to preach the exact same message that Jesus preached: **“that men should repent”** (12), and according to Matthew that **“the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 10:7)
 - c. They were to cast out demons and heal the sick (7, 13, and Matthew 10:1)—which serve both as an expression of Christ’s compassion and a validation of their preaching
 - d. They were to take only one pair of clothes, sandals and a staff, but nothing else—**“no bread, no bag, no money in their belt”** (8)

- e. Rather, they were to rely upon the hospitality of those who would welcome them and the message they preached (10)
 - f. Jesus final instructions involved both a warning for the Twelve and judgment for those that rejected them (11): **“Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”**
 - 1) Jesus instructed them to pronounce judgment on those who rejected them—shaking the dust off the soles of feet was a custom Jews would perform after walking through gentile or pagan regions before returning home; here it becomes a symbol of judgment against those who rejected the Gospel by declaring them unclean and pagan
 - 2) This also serves as a warning to the apostles that they would face opposition—Matthew’s account is much more detailed and ominous (READ Matthew 10:16-42)
3. When the apostles return home, they report to Jesus all that they had done and taught (30)

Conclusion

- 1. Matthew, Mark and Luke all indicate that these two events—Jesus’s rejection in His hometown at Nazareth and the sending out of the Twelve—didn’t happen back to back; they were separated by an indefinite amount of time as Jesus preached in Galilee
- 2. However, Mark has a reason for presenting them together--One of his stated goals is to present Jesus as the promised Messiah
- 3. Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 describe the Messiah as One who suffers and would be persecuted, rejected and killed
- 4. So, these two events serve to establish Jesus as that suffering Messiah and foreshadow what’s going to happen as He approaches His final destination—Jerusalem and the Cross
- 5. These two events also serve to prepare His disciples (both back then and now) for what we should ultimately expect as His followers
- 6. This is especially important for us American Christians because in many ways Christendom here has been hijacked by a form of easy believism and prosperity Gospel that has caused us to forget that while salvation comes with tremendous blessings, it also comes with a price—persecution and suffering
- 7. Should it really shock us that Christians are being targeted now more than ever, for not just speaking what true, but simply for believing what the Bible says and trying to live it out in our own lives?
- 8. It’s not just the rejection and persecution of Jesus that proves He is the Messiah, but the rejection and persecution of His followers as well