

1. **Introduction:** After Jesus visit to His hometown village of Nazareth where His visit ended with angry Nazarenes attempting to throw Him off a cliff, Jesus continued to preach and heal in other villages of Galilee.
2. **Mark 6:6b-13:** “And he went about among the villages teaching.<sup>7</sup> And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.<sup>8</sup> He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff - no bread, no bag, no money in their belts - <sup>9</sup>but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics <sup>10</sup>And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.<sup>11</sup> And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. <sup>12</sup>“So they (the disciples) went out and proclaimed that people should repent. <sup>13</sup>And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.”
  - As Jesus continued His own ministry, He sent His disciples, personally trained by Him, out in pairs to preach and heal without Him being physically present. The time would come when they must minister alone.
  - After sending the 12 on their mission, Jesus continued His personal ministry. He seems to have sent each pair to a general area without telling them in detail where to go to preach the gospel.
  - In Matthew we learn they were not to go to Samaria. Wherever they went, their focus was to be on evangelizing the lost sheep of Israel.
  - Mark cites the instructions Jesus gave the twelve which began with delegated authority for dealing with unclean spirits and for healing.
  - Jesus’ further instructions required them to travel light depending on God to meet their needs rather than carrying weeks of provisions.
  - They were to wear normal clothes and carry a staff but no money, no food, no extra sandals or clothes.
  - Jesus instructed them to use their time wisely. They were to concentrate on their mission of ministry. Proclaim the gospel truth only to those willing to listen and believe.
  - If they encountered resistance, they were to leave, shaking the dust from the soles of their feet as a testimony against those who wouldn’t listen.
  - Jews, who traveled outside their country, were trained to get rid of the dust accumulated in their travel before reentering Israel. The dust of foreign areas was considered to be ritually contaminating.

- When Jesus instructed the twelve to shake dust from their feet upon leaving a place where they were not welcomed to present the gospel, He was saying, treat them as infidels whose dust is ritually contaminating.
  - Each pair of the twelve preached repentance, a deliberate, radical, life-changing turning from a wrong way of life to the right way of life.
  - At this point Mark uses his “sandwich” technique of interleaving stories. He inserts the story of Herod and John. He begins at a point after John has been beheaded by Herod and works backward to that event.
  - The form is, Mark 6:6b-13, the disciples with delegated responsibility and authority were sent out in pairs to minister in Jesus’ absence.
  - Mark 6:14-29 inserts the story of the John the Baptist and Herod.
  - Mark 6:30-32 returns to the experience of the 12. They sought a quiet place to discuss the results of their solo ministry efforts.
  - Consider the inserted story of John the Baptist and Herod.
3. **Mark 6:14-16:** *“King Herod heard of it (that is, heard of the casting out of demons and healing the sick), for Jesus’ name had become known. Some said, ‘John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.’<sup>15</sup> But others said, ‘He is Elijah.’ And others said, ‘He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.’<sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he said, ‘John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.’”*
- Herod had executed John the Baptist. Afterwards, he began to hear of the results of the astounding ministry of Jesus and His disciples.
  - There also came rumors about Jesus doing amazing things.
  - Some said Jesus was John raised from the dead. Others said He is Elijah or a new prophet like the prophets of old.
  - Since it had been about 400 years since the last known prophet died. A new prophet would be awesome news.
  - In his mind, Herod had no doubt about the identity of that miracle worker. He said, *“John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.”*
4. **Mark 6:17-18:** *“For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, because he had married her.<sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.’”*
- John condemned as unlawful Herod’s marriage to his brother Philip’s wife. That accusation made both Herod and Herodias very angry.

- John was seized and put into prison where he remained. Herod's military and political power was greater than any other in the area. His superior was the emperor in Rome.
5. **Mark 6:19-20**: *“And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not,<sup>20</sup>for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.”*
- Herodias was particularly angry at John and wanted him executed.
  - Herod, however, feared John and kept him in prison but safe.
  - Herod liked to talk to John from time to time. Each talk left Herod perplexed, yet Herod gladly listened to what John had to say.
  - That was the situation when the time came to celebrate Herod's birthday.
6. **Mark 6:21-23**: *“But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup>For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.’ <sup>23</sup>And he vowed to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.’”*
- Herodias desperately wanted John executed, but she had been unable to find a situation that would overcome Herod's fear of John.
  - Then there seemed to be an opportunity when a big all-male banquet was scheduled to celebrate Herod's birthday. The only women allowed would be servers and entertainers.
  - Sensual professional women were the principal dancers. At some point in the entertainment, Herodias sent her daughter (Salome), a teenager of marriageable age, to perform in place of the professionals.
  - Salome gave a seductive performance that immensely pleased Herod.
  - Herod was so pleased that he impulsively promised to give the girl whatever she asked up to half his kingdom.
  - She didn't know how to respond and went out to talk to her mother.
7. **Mark 6:24-25**: *“And she went out and said to her mother, ‘For what should I ask?’ And she said, ‘The head of John the Baptist.’”*
- This was the moment Herodias had been waiting for. Herod would have to do what she had wanted all along. Herodias said, ask for John's head.
8. **Mark 6:25**: *“And she (Salome) came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’”*

- Salome immediately went to the king, embellishing Herodias request by asking that John's head be delivered at once on a platter.
9. **Mark 6:26-28:** *“And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her.<sup>27</sup> And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison <sup>28</sup>and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.*
- Herod found himself in a dilemma. He had been trapped by his own lust into making a commitment he would have resisted under almost any other conditions. He did not want to execute John.
  - Herod was trapped. His honor must be preserved before His guests. The rash promise could not be recalled. Now he must follow through to save face before those gathered to celebrate his birthday.
  - He immediately sent an executioner to carry out the beheading. The executioner returned with John's head on a large dish. Salome went out of the banquet hall carrying the platter to her mother.
10. **Mark 6:29:** *“When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.”*
- John's disciples heard of the execution and came to take John's body and laid it in a tomb. Whether the burial included his head is not known.
  - There are obvious parallels between John's and Jesus' executions and burials. Both Jesus and John were faithful to the end of their mortal lives, and both died at the hand of civil authority.
11. **Mark 6:30:** *“The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.”*
- In this verse, Mark completes the story he began in 6:7-13.
  - Jesus delegated the 12 to carry on the tasks of preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and casting out demons as He did.
  - He sent them out in pairs armed with His divine authority to carry out their assigned mission.
  - From other gospel writers as well as Mark, their mission was carried out with great success. The excited disciples returned to Capernaum to tell Jesus what they had done and taught.
  - We will begin the next lesson at Mark 6:31.