

Gospel of Jesus Christ According to St. Mark

Chapter Six

READ 6:1-3

OBS: Jesus leaves His base at Capernaum and heads south to His Home town of Nazareth (with His disciples).

He teaches authoritatively in the synagogues on the Sabbath. From the parallel passage (in Luke 4:16-30) we know He was commenting on the messianic passage in Isaiah 61:1-2 and telling His hearers that the messianic kingdom was upon them.

At first the people are “astonished” ...

(the Greek word can be translated "thunderstruck" [v. 2] †ἐκπλήσσω ekpléssō, ek-place'-so; from [G1537](#) and [G4141](#); to strike with astonishment:—amaze, astonish).

...by the thought that this person they've known all along, from the same town as they, could possibly be the messiah; the son of a simple carpenter [v. 3] whose family was well known to them [v. 3].

But then it seems their astonishment quickly turns to skepticism. Based on (v. 3) they obviously thought it was unlikely that He was the messiah. Perhaps there's even a hint in their original question, "where did He get these things" [v. 2] that the source of His power and knowledge was demonic (as the Pharisees suggested in 3:22).

So they are “offended” by Him: the Greek word used there is:

σκανδαλίζω skandalízō, skan-dal-id'-zo; from [G4625](#); to entrap, i.e. trip up (figuratively, stumble (transitively) or entice to sin, apostasy or displeasure):—(make to) offend.

Some interpreters see the title "the son of Mary" (v. 3) as one meant for disrespect. At this time to call a man the son of his mother was to imply he did not know who his father was (i.e., illegitimate). It could be that the Lord's Virgin Birth and mother being found to be pregnant before her marriage to Joseph had given rise to ugly rumors. P. 85

Lastly, who are these "brothers and sisters" of the Lord? The Church is emphatic and clear that St. Mary, the Theotokos, is "Ever-Virgin" and never had any other children but Jesus. This is why our deacon's end the Litany of Peace with the words, "Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed, and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary."

There are many reasons, proofs & arguments for belief in Mary's ever-virginity. This has, by far, been the majority position in the Church's for 2,000 years (with a few notable exceptions). Church Fathers like: St. Athanasius (Alexandria, 293-373); St. Epiphanius (Palestine, 315?-403); St. Jerome (Stridon, present day Yugoslavia, 345?-419); St. Augustine (Numidia, now Algeria, 354-430); St. Cyril the Great (Alexandria, 376-444); and others affirm this teaching. It is a dogma of the universal Church and the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II, AD 553-554) twice calls St. Mary "Ever-Virgin."

Because of a few passages like this one, some misunderstood these "brothers & sisters of the Lord" (in Greek adelphos & adelphe) to be children of St. Mary the Theotokos. But there are several reasons why this is not correct.

First the word "adelphos" in Greek (along with its Hebrew equivalent) means "a blood relative." For example in Gen 14:14 Lot is referred to as Abraham's "brother" even though, in fact, he was his nephew. So the fact they are called his brothers & sisters only proves they were near blood relatives.

Secondly two brothers mentioned here (James and Joses) are mentioned again later (15:40) and specifically stated not to be the children of Jesus' mother. Instead they are the sons of a woman at the foot of the Cross is called "Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses." In St. Matthew's Gospel she is called "the other Mary" (Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56). In the Gospel of St. John this same woman is referred to as "Mary the wife of Clopas" (19:25) and, again, she is differentiated from Jesus' mother who was also at the foot of the Cross.

A first century Christian writer, named Hegesippus, confirms that St. Joseph's brother was Clopas. So Clopas was the brother of St. Joseph and his wife (Mary), this other Mary would be the sister in law of Joseph & Mary, Mother of God and her offspring (James and Joses) would be "brothers" (i.e., blood relatives or cousins) of

Jesus. So the Church's long held faith, confirmed at the 5th Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II, AD 553), is not at all contradicted by this passage.

OSB Note 6:1-3

READ 6:4-6a

OBS: According to our Lord's words here (v. 4) can be understood actually as an argument for His credibility. In other words their rejection of Him was consistent with Israel's treatment of all their true prophets.

“He could do no work of power there” (v. 5), finding no one worthy or receptive. There were a few people who believe in Him and are healed, but the city as a whole rejected Him, so that He marveled at their unbelief (v. 6). He had done so-many wondrous works among them, their rejection of Him in the face of this was perverse and inexplicable.” P. 88

OSB Note 6:5-6

READ 6:6b-13

OBS: At this time the Lord was going around the villages of Galilee in a circuit and teaching His message. In order to reach all of Israel before His passion, Jesus enlists the help of the Twelve. This is not just to accompany Him but to go out themselves, two by two, as His ambassadors. The Greek word used for “send,” *apostello*, is from where we get the word “apostle”: One sent on a mission.

The Lord gives the apostles a share in His authority over the unclean spirits to help them show that their word should be received just as His (v. 7). P. 89

They were to travel (v. 8) simply with the sandals on their feet not even bringing two copper coins (the smallest of coins). “No two tunics” refers to the extra shirt customary for those camping outdoors. They were to depend on an indoor welcome they were to receive.

They are told to stay in whatever house (v. 6) that will receive them until they leave. In other words don't look to exchange their first place of lodging for a better, richer or more prestigious one. Their comfort was irrelevant; what mattered was the [Gospel](#) message and mission!

The “shaking off the dust from under their feet” (v. 11) was what pious Jews would do with the pagan dust from their feet as they crossed the border and reentered Israel. Likewise the apostles were to shake out the dust under their feet when they left any village that rejected Christ, for a witness against them. God would judge them on the last day!

The apostles do great signs (v. 11), [again, to](#) show their message should be accepted.

OSB Note 6:13

READ 6:14-16

OSB Note 6:14

OSB Note 6:15

OBS: King Herod [Antipas](#) (v. 14) hears of the Lord's fame perhaps due to the widespread work of the Twelve. Herod was not actually a king but more like a governor. He was the son of the famous King “Herod the Great” who killed the holy innocents at the time of Christ's infancy.

ICBS: After the death of Herod the Great 4/1 B.C.) the Roman Emperor Augustus divided the kingdom in Palestine among three of Herod's sons. Herod Antipas received the title “Tetrarch” and governed until AD 39. He had authority over only a portion of Roman Palestine (the regions of Galilee and Perea). His brothers, Archelaus and Phillip, were apportioned the remainder. But he was popularly known as "king."

OBS: He was obviously haunted by his guilty conscience. Notice how he doesn't just say "it is John returned" but rather "it is John, whom I beheaded." He had been very reluctant to kill John b/c in some small corner of his mind he knew that John was a holy man and it would probably come back to haunt him.

READ 6:17-29

OSB Note 6:17-29

OSB Note 6:20

OBS: Making reference to Herod's guilty conscience gives Mark an opportunity here to insert the story of how John was **actually** executed. John had come to call all Israel to repentance for their sins, so he did not shrink away **even** from rebuking Herod himself.

ICSB: Herod had an illicit union with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. According to Leve 18:16 and 20:21, the it was forbidden for a man to marry his brother's wife when the brother is still living.

OBS: The sins of the king would bring divine judgment upon the whole land (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-13). Herod had no intentions of repenting (he was really a very irreligious man). He was probably much more concerned about John's death causing a public uprising or rebellion.

Herod's wife, Herodias, obviously held a very big grudge and wanted him dead. So she looked for an opportune time to have him killed. Herod probably had been drinking excessively and wasn't completely sober when he promised half his kingdom **to Herodias' daughter**. He probably expected her to ask for some fine garment, gold jewelry or a favorite **piece of property**.

Herodias knew this was the moment she had been waiting for.

The daughter evidently shared her mother's cold heart and sick morbidity. Enjoying her moment in the spotlight, she made the most of the drama. **She made her request** as if requesting a certain dish be brought **to her** as the next course in the lavish banquet. One can almost hear her slow and deliberate request, and see her quick **eyes** scanning the crowd, relishing the moment: "I want you at once to give me," she said in slow and

deliberate words, "on a plate" one can image the **building drama and the dramatic pause** that followed... "the head of John the Baptizer." These last words come at the end of the sentence in Greek (v. 25). So they were uttered like a punchline to a joke, the surprising, dramatic, and horrifying climax of her request.

The king was no doubt surprised, **stunned** and horrified! He became very grieved (v. 26) and was probably filled with agony and regret. But because his oath was made expressly to impress his guests with his royal generosity, as a kind drunken display of his power, he couldn't afford politically to be seen publicly reneging on his word and oath. Thus John the Baptist met his end through the scheming of an adulterous wife, her lascivious daughter, and the weakness of a drunken ruler.

Among other things, this story again shows us **that** with God, morality matters. The king and his wife ultimately choose to murder a **holy** prophet rather than reform their lives in accord with God's moral **truth**.

READ 6:30-32

OSB Note 6:30

OSB Note 6:31

OBS: The Lord and the apostles are exhausted and need **to** rest and revive. So they leave for the wilderness or deserted place (v. 31). The wilderness is prominent in Mark's Gospel. John the Baptist goes there for his ministry; Christ **overcomes temptation** in the wilderness, and He frequented lonely "deserted places" (1:35, 45) for prayer and teaching. This is not accidental. St. Mark means to show us that just as Israel spent time in the wilderness after leaving Egypt and found the grace of God there (Jer 31:2 / ? LXX), so Israel finds Christ in the wilderness and with Him the grace of God. P. 98

READ 6:33-44

OSB Note Mt 14:14-27 [Pf. 1295] for the miracle of the multiplication

OBS: Their hoped for rest is not to be b/c many from the villages see them going to the deserted place and precede them there. One would expect our Lord to be a little tired and upset with them

but being **He is** the Good Shepherd, He is moved with compassion and has heartfelt love for them (v. 34) b/c they **are** like sheep with no shepherd [bring icon of Christ the Good Shepherd and explain the Greek on it]. So despite being exhausted what does He do (v. 34)?

The Apostles then recognize a crisis is mounting. There are approximate 15,000 people there (**5,000 men, plus women and children**) and evening was coming **fast** (v. 35), and with it the problem of where to find food for such a huge crowd (v. 35-36).

Despite the small amount they have from the boy -five barley loaves & two fish, Jesus has them all sit down on the green grass (v. 39).

The **green grass** might be a reference to our Lord being the divine Good Shepherd (from Psalm 23/22 LXX) "He makes me lie down in green pastures." The people sit down in groupings, party by party, like at a banquet party as if sitting at separate tables, ready for the food to be served.

[[[The customary Jewish blessing before a meal was to look down at the food being blessed but Christ looks up to heaven to show He is invoking the power of the heavenly father.]]] The tradition Jewish blessing was, "Blessed are You, O Lord our god, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." Jesus breaks the bread and gives to the disciples to distribute to the multitude -until all ate and were filled (v. 42). The word "full" in Greek is "chortazo" meaning to be "gorged." This was not a light meal but a feast!

In fact twelve full baskets of bread fragments and fish are left over (v. 43). This shows that Christ is the Good Shepherd and promised messiah come to feed all the tribes of Israel with the truth. **That this is done through the Twelve Apostles is significant b/c it shows they are the ones** sent by Christ to do this. As the divine shepherd of Israel, Christ "opens His hand and satisfies the desires of every living thing" (Ps. 145).

In stark contrast to the drunken banquet of King Herod (v. 21) the glorious banquet of Israel's true King brings the presence and blessing of God. **This was** an unmistakable sign that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

READ 6:45-52

OBS: The apostles are to precede Him to the other side of the lake. [[[This was a different Behsaida from that on the northeastern side. It was called Behsaida-Julias to differentiate it from the Bethsaida in the west.]]]

While Jesus is alone and prays to the fourth watch of the night which is approximately after 3 a.m. (v. 47-48), He realizes the apostles are in need of Him while they are **in a sea storm** straining and "tormented in their rowing" (literally, v. 48). So Jesus comes to them, in the fourth watch of the night (approximately b/t 3 and 6 a.m.), walking on the sea!

"Intended to pass by" can be translated "come alongside them" (cf. Luke 12:37), that is, He intended to come close to comfort and rescue them. After Jesus gets into the boat, the winds cease and a great calm settles on the lake. This was the final miracle of a day filled with miracles, and the disciples were greatly beside themselves with astonishment **and probably exhausted**. P. 104

St. Mark, echoing the words of His source, St. Peter gives the harsh analysis of why there were astonished (v. 51). **Q. Why had they not understand the multiplication of the bread b/c their hearts were hardened (v. 52).**

OSB Note Mt 14:27 [Pf. 1296] for a summary / conclusion

READ 6:53-54

OBS: This shows how Jesus had become immensely popular, wherever He went, in cities, villages or in country places, because of the wonders He was working. P. 105

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"With God all things are possible... We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us... Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!"