

Read Mark 6: 45-56

4. (a). Why had the disciples separated from Jesus?

Why does he come to them?

(b). What effect did this have on the disciples?

How would you have responded in their sandals?

(c). What should the disciples have understood about the loaves?

(d). Mark tells us that the disciples failed to understand the loaves because their hearts were hardened.

What might have caused this hardening of the heart?

What causes our hearts to be 'hardened'?



NB Verses 53-56 appear to summarise much of what has gone before – did you notice the references and asides to previous incidents....?

People were drawn to Jesus for healing and he didn't turn them away even though that wasn't his primary reason for being there. N T WRIGHT

4. (a). Why do you think that Mark includes this little section here?

(b). What views did most people seem to have of Jesus according to these verses?

This section deals very much with the attitude and response of the disciples to the ministry of Jesus.

(c) What lessons or warnings can we draw from their experiences?

(d) How can we show compassion and help others even when people interrupt our plans?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 8: CHAPTERS 6: 7-56 "UNDERSTANDING THE LOAVES"



Read Mark 6: 7-13

QUESTIONS:

- 1.(a). Why do you think that Jesus sent out the disciples?
Why in pairs?
- (b). What authority does he give them? Why that?
- (c) Why do you think he gives them such detailed instructions? What is significant about them?

NB The Rabbinic law said that the dust of a Gentile country was defiled, and that when a man entered Palestine from another country he must shake off

every particle of dust of the unclean land. It was a pictorial formal denial that a Jew could have any fellowship even with the dust of a heathen land. It is as if Jesus said, "If they refuse to listen to you, the only thing you can do is to treat them as a rigid Jew would treat a Gentile house. There can be no fellowship between them and you."



So we can see that the mark of the Christian disciple was to be utter simplicity, complete trust, and the generosity which is out always to give and never to demand. BARCLAY

- (d) How successful was their mission?

NB The towns they visit are judged on their hospitality. The question is not whether they believe you or whether they are morally upright people, but whether they welcome you. PLACHE

- (e) Why do you think there is this emphasis on hospitality?
- (f) There is a great sense of urgency in this account of the mission of the disciples. In what ways should there be a similar urgency in the work of the church today?

Read Mark 6: 14-29

2.(a). What kind of man was Herod?

How would you describe him?

(b). This flashback to the execution of John the Baptist interrupts the account of Jesus' sending out the Twelve to preach and heal.

Why do you suppose Mark recounts it here?

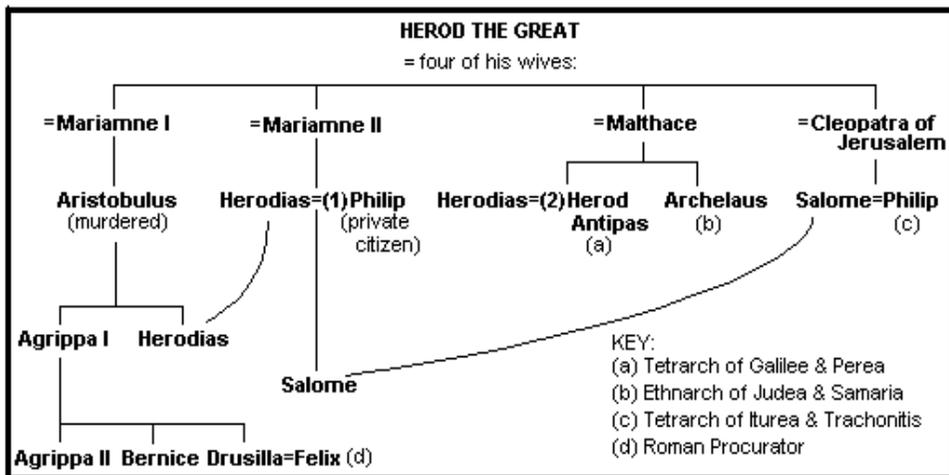
(c). Why do you think we have so much detail about a peripheral event? What does that tell us?

(d) Why do you think that Herod would think Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead?

(e) Why did John make such a fuss over the fact that Herod had remarried – especially of one who claimed to be king of the Jews?

(f) Why does Herod order John's beheading?

(g) When does pressure to please people override our desire to obey God?



NB

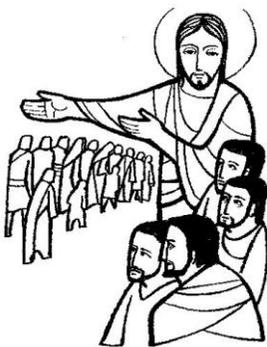
Herodias, the daughter of Aristobulus (son of Herod the Great) and Bernice (daughter of Herod the Great's sister, Salome), was married to Herod Philip, another son of Herod the Great. She was therefore the half niece of both Herods and the sister-in-law of Antipas. This Philip is not the better known son of Herod and Cleopatra, who was the tetrarch. He is the son of Mariamne II and lived privately in Rome. When Herod Antipas was staying with them on a visit to Rome, he fell in love with Herodias and brazenly

proposed marriage. She agreed upon the condition that he divorce his current wife, the daughter of Aretas IV, king of Nabatea. The outraged Aretas began a border war that led to serious military losses for Herod Antipas. The divorce also touched off religious protests at home because marrying the wife of his half brother was forbidden and regarded as incest (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). Antipas would have deemed John's attack on his remarriage as a political threat. ARNOLD

Read Mark 6: 30-44

Think back through the story Mark has just told us. Herod is off in his palace, probably far to the south of the Sea of Galilee, carousing with his cronies, winking at pretty girls, beheading prophets. His henchmen on the ground are grasping bullies. Here are his people, desperate for leadership. And here is a young prophet to whom they flock. Is he the king-in-waiting? That's the echo we must hear behind this story. N T Wright

3. (a). What was the result of their ministry on the disciples?
What does Jesus propose they do?
- (b). What differences are there between the approach of Jesus to the crowd and that of his disciples?
Why do the disciples want to send them away?
What is Jesus' challenge to them instead?
- (c). Jesus and Herod, the two kings in this passage, both serve banquets. Compare the two.
- (d). What do you think v. 34 means?



NB The image of sheep without a shepherd echoes Moses' request for his successor when he is informed that he cannot lead them into the promised land (Num. 27:15-17). ARNOLD

- (e). Why so much left over?
How did they know there were so many present?
- (f). What differences are there between the accounts of this feeding in the other Gospels?
- (g). Have you seen God use meagre resources to meet a challenging situation?