

THE GOSPEL OF MARK: STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

6, The Gospel conflict in this sinful world against unbelief, disbelief, false belief, and weak belief, but saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the victory that overcomes the world, Part 6C

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Introduction: Following Jesus' ministerial visit and conflict with unbelief in His hometown of Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6), He sends His 12 Apostles out on gospel missions where they too will face conflict in this sinful world in the midst of representing the power of the gospel. Consider that they also visited some of their hometowns...

The peculiar arrangements and instructions Jesus gave the Apostles is generally explained by Him sending them in pairs for safety and corroborating testimony, with no provisions to prove their faith, and when rejected to shake the dust off their feet as a Jewish cultural gesture.

However, upon closer look at this Scripture passage, Mark 6:7-13 (cf. Matt. 10:1-15, Luke 9:1-6), in comparison with the broader scope of salvation history in Scripture connects Old Testament themes and types with New Covenant gospel fulfillment.

What is the Biblical connection and significance of Jesus sending the Apostles two by two, instructing them to make no extra provisions, and to shake the dust off their feet as a sign of God's judgment?

Chapter 6, The Gospel conflict in this sinful world against unbelief, disbelief, false belief, and weak belief, but saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the victory that overcomes the world.

vv. 1-6, Unbelief as expressed by common rejections...

vv. 7-13, Disbelief over the message of repentance, conversion, and judgment...

v.7, Calling and sending the Apostles, Jesus uses language expressing official commission to represent Him as the source and power of the gospel:

- Previously Jesus chose the 12 Apostles by name from a group of devoted disciples, cf. Mk. 3:13-19...
- Jesus officially calls and sends the Apostles by name in pairs (cf. Matt. 10:1ff), the wording in Mark's Gospel "*two by two*" connects with the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark (Genesis 7:9, chapters 6-8). The Biblical account of Noah's Ark and the world-wide flood is not only an historical reality but also a type, i.e. covenantal object lesson, about God's way of salvation, additional Scripture passages verify this typology:
- Jesus compares disbelief over the Gospel of the Kingdom of God like disbelief in the days of Noah, cf. Matthew 24:14, 37-39 et al.,
- Noah is commended as a believer and preacher of the righteousness that is imputed by faith and so salvation by grace, cf. Hebrews 11:7, 1 Peter 3:19-20, 2 Peter 2:5,
*God's saving Noah and his family by the ark through the flood is identified as a Biblical type of the eternal salvation that is in Jesus Christ symbolized by New Covenant Baptism, cf. 2 Peter 3:18-22.

- God gathered the general animals onto Noah's Ark two by two, male and female, in order to preserve and repopulate the earth after the flood, Jesus sends His Apostles out two by two in order to gather His lost sheep into the Ark of salvation before the final judgment of God.

**Just like in the days of Noah preparing the ark and the days of Jesus and His Apostle preaching repentance to enter the Kingdom of God, in every generation then and now the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes into conflict with disbelief, e.g. people going about their daily lives with no consideration for their souls in eternity, a dismissive attitude about the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin...*

vv. 8-9, Jesus restricts the preparations and provisions the Apostles are to have on this gospel mission:

- The list of things Jesus restricts is neither a moral prohibition of things sinful nor an arbitrary test of faith, but a demonstration of a greater exodus by walking away from the kingdoms of this world for the Kingdom of Heaven as God directed and delivered the Hebrews from Egypt by Moses, "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover." (Exodus 12:11; cf. 12:33, Deut. 16:3)
- The emphasis is on an anticipated and ready "haste" to follow God's promises without doubts or objections. Jesus sends the Apostles without preparations, they do not have time to go home and pack, they are not going on a holiday...
**So like God's instructions to Moses for the Hebrews' Exodus from Egypt (used throughout the Bible as type for salvation, cf. et al.), not only for trusting God's providence but also for immediate obedience the Apostles are to trust and obey Jesus as the greater Moses with the message of the greater exodus...*

vv. 10-11, Jesus using the gesture of shaking the dust off the feet should be interpreted in terms of Biblical symbolism more so than a cultural expression of Jewish separation.

- It is commonly reported about these verses (cf. Acts 13:51) that this gesture was practiced by strict Jews when returning from pagan locations they would shake the pagan unclean dust off their feet...
- However, Jesus explains this gesture with Biblical references to be about warning of the Day of the LORD's final judgment. Jesus names the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Genesis 19, et al.) in view of God's judgment to come with the reminder that "*from dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*" (Genesis 3:19; cf. 2:7, 3:14)
**So Jesus' meaning of this cultural practice is sanctified into an expression for greater significance than family or national superiority, not as a symbol of separation for a superior earthly kingdom but of the final separation in view of death and eternal judgment which gives true focus to the Gospel of Jesus Christ!*

vv. 12-13, Although there is conflict with disbelief in this sinful world, the Apostle's preaching of the Gospel attested by signs of power over demons as well as anointing and healing many sick people gave testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the Anointed One of God for the faith that overcomes the world. And by Jesus' commission to the Church we continue to preach the same Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven in this sinful world.