

**The twelve are sent on a mission**

**1. Jesus' example**

**2. Sent**

**3. Two by two**

**4. Authority over demons**

**5. Hospitality**

**6. Preach repentance**

**Herod Antipas**

**1. Sinned badly**

**2. God's voice through John the Baptist**

**3. Confusion**

As often in the work of Jesus, opposition leads to expansion. Just as the arrest of John had prompted Jesus to go to Galilee<sup>□1</sup>, and just as the plan to kill Him had prompted Him to appoint the Twelve, so now rejection at Nazareth<sup>□2</sup> prompted Jesus to send the Twelve on their first mission. It is the third stage, according to Mark, of their training. First they had been invited to work with Him; then they had been given a particular name, 'apostle'. Now they are sent out on a mission but Jesus will not travel with them<sup>□3</sup>.

1. First, **He gives them an example**. He went round the villages teaching. He went on a mission with them before sending them on similar work on their own<sup>□1</sup>.

2. **He 'sends' them**<sup>□1</sup>. During this time they will know that they are doing the work of God in God's will. They have not been running ahead of God.

3. **He sends them in a way that will not allow any worker to become isolated**. Mark mentions that they are sent out 'two by two'<sup>□1</sup>.

4. **He gives them authority over demons**<sup>□1</sup>.

5. **They are to trust in the hospitality of the people of Israel**. They are to go in such a way that they will be dependent on those they preach to. They take no bread, no beggar's bag, no money, no spare shirt<sup>□1</sup>. They may take a staff. (Even the staff was to be provided for them, 'Don't **acquire** ... a staff, for the worker is worth his keep', says Matthew 10:10.)<sup>1</sup> The instructions here relate to the fact that Jesus is announcing Himself to **Israel**. When the work is pioneer evangelism among pagans, one does not expect support from them (see 3 John 7, 'receiving nothing from the pagans') but when there is ministry to God's people the worker expects to be taken care of by the people of God. In modern church life the equivalent principle is: evangelists get support from **sending** churches; teachers get support from **receiving** churches.

When they found a home which would give them accommodation they are, if possible, to stay at one place during their time in that town. (It is exhausting to move too frequently!)

If they are rejected, they must simply move on, shaking the dust off their feet – a symbolic act signifying that the town is unclean and will come under God's judgement. The act will be 'a testimony to them', a sign before God that the town is fit for judgement.

6. **Their message is a message of repentance**. The people will have to 'change their minds' about many things and renounce old ways if they are to experience the blessings of the kingdom of God which are coming through Jesus.

So they go out and they are given much spiritual power<sup>□1</sup>. The message they preach is confirmed by deliverances and healings.

One person who is unhappy to hear about what Jesus was doing, was Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great who is well-known from the story of Matthew 2:1–20. When Herod the Great died in 4 BC his kingdom was divided and Herod Antipas became ruler of Galilee until AD 39.

1. **Herod was a man who knew he had sinned badly**. Herod Antipas had a brother, Herod Philip,<sup>2</sup> who was married to Herodias. Herod Antipas had persuaded Herodias to leave Philip and had married her<sup>□1</sup>. It was against the law of Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21.

2. **Herod heard the voice of God through John**. John the Baptist had said bluntly that what Herod had done was wrong<sup>□1</sup>, and Herod had known that John was right in what he had said. He had taken his brother's wife. Herodias was furiously resentful<sup>□2</sup>.

3. **For a while Herod lived in a confused state**. Like many a sinner under conviction of his sinfulness Herod was a mass of contradiction. He kept John in prison, yet he protected him from Herodias<sup>□1</sup>. He knew he was a good man and he liked to hear John preach<sup>□2</sup>. Yet he would not do anything about his own sin. He could have gone to Philip and Herodias and John the Baptist and told them that he knew what he had done was wrong. But he was unwilling to swallow his pride.

□1	1:14
□2	6: 1–6a
□3	6:6b–7
□1	6:6b
□1	6:7
□1	6:7
□1	6:7b
□1	6:8–9
□1	6:14
□1	6:1 7b
□1	6:18
□2	6:19
□1	6:20
□2	6:20

#### 4. Pride

4. **Herod was trapped by his pride and led into greater sinfulness.** It takes sin to protect sin. Herod had sinned in taking his brother's wife. But then John the Baptist came to him with a particular word from God. So he imprisoned John in resentment and hatred of the word which kept on coming to him. One sin took another sin to protect the first sin.

This is the trouble with the life of sin. It leads into ever deeper and deeper entanglement.

Then it got worse. Herod wanted to limit his wickedness. He did not wish to go any further in his downward course of persecuting John the Baptist. But then he was pushed further still by his new 'wife', Herodias. There is a large banquet for Herod's birthday. There is much feasting and laughing and celebrating. Lots of important people are there<sup>□1</sup>. Herodias gets her daughter, the princess, to come and dance<sup>□2</sup> before the men in a way that normally only a prostitute would do. The men like the way she dances and Herod makes a foolish promise to do anything for her that she wants<sup>□3</sup>. Prompted by Herodias she asks for the head of John the Baptist immediately<sup>□4</sup>. Herod is trapped. The same pride that will not let him confess his sin will not let him break his word. He would rather commit murder than look foolish before his guests. Pride leads us into strange ways! Herod is reluctant<sup>□5</sup> but John is executed<sup>□6</sup>. John's disciples take the body for burial.<sup>□7</sup>

- *Trapped by his wife into executing John the Baptist*

- 1 6:21
- 2 6:22a
- 3 6:22b–23
- 4 6:24–25
- 5 6:26
- 6 6:27–28
- 7 6:29

#### 5. Jesus

5. **Now Herod hears about Jesus.** The amazing thing is that God is giving Herod yet another opportunity! Herod is discovering that God's word to him will not go away. He had got rid of John but now God's word was coming back to him in the preaching of Jesus and His apostles.

Actually it was amazing mercy. It is great mercy when the word of God keeps coming to us. It is God's wrath when the word is taken away and we hear no more from God. Today if you hear God's voice, do not harden your heart. You may not hear God's voice indefinitely.

Herod had a chance to send for this 'John-back-from-the-dead' and ask for mercy. He believed in John's preaching. He believed in the supernatural. He believed that God could raise the dead. But Herod will not do anything. He hears God's voice but he hardens his heart.

A while later, Herod Antipas and Jesus met each other<sup>□1</sup>. But Jesus would not say a word to him. Herod rejected Jesus utterly<sup>□2</sup>.

- *Herod was a man who knew God was speaking to him but ignored God's voice*

Herod was a man who knew that God was speaking to him but would do nothing about it. Then He met the Son of God but it was too late. Since he had resisted God's voice, God's voice was no longer coming to him. Jesus had nothing to say to him. Jesus' mission to the world would continue. Herod had a chance to receive it but missed his opportunity. Herod was lost, but the kingdom of God would continue to go forward through Jesus.

- 1 see Luke 23:7–12
- 2 see Luke 23:11–12

1 There is no contradiction between Matthew and Mark. Matthew does not forbid a staff; he makes the point that it should be provided by others for the worker is worthy of such support.

2 It seems Herod the Great had two sons with the name Philip (but they had different mothers). This one is Herod Philip, son of Mariamne and Herod the Great. See H. Hoehner, Herod Antipas (CUP, 1972, pp. 131–1 36).

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