

# The Folly of Unbelief

Mark 6:1-29

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## Introduction

Have you ever passed up on opportunity that you later regretted?

Sometimes we pass up opportunities that later we regret. We make foolish choices declining opportunities that we should have accepted. In the passage that this study is looking at in the gospel of Mark we meet a number of people who make some foolish choices when it came to Jesus. Unlike the two examples of faith at the end of chapter 5 these people choose to miss out on the great things that God was doing by refusing to believe.

## The people of Nazareth

Mark wrote that Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith of the people of his hometown. Jesus's hometown was Nazareth which was south of Capernaum in the hill country of Galilee. It was the place where his family had lived and where he had grown up and lived until he had commenced his ministry. Please read verse 1 to 6 of chapter 6 to under the problem that the Nazarenes had with believing Jesus.

1. What was the initial reaction of the Nazarenes to the ministry of Jesus?
2. Why did these people take offense at Jesus?
3. Why didn't Jesus do many miracles there?

### Think about it

In Nazareth we see people refusing to believe in spite of what they were hearing and seeing about Jesus. They refused to believe that he could be more than the carpenter in spite of the evidence to the contrary.

In what today do people make the same mistake?

The old saying goes that “familiarity breeds contempt”. In this case it bred “unbelief”. How can this happen today and who are the sort of people who might be in danger of this sort of attitude?

## The message of the kingdom

Jesus went from village to village preaching the message of the kingdom. He also sent his disciples out two by two in order to prepare people for the kingdom of God which was drawing near. Please read verses 6 to 12 to read about the sending out of the twelve.

3. What authority did Jesus give the twelve?

4. Why would there be a need in some townships to shake the dust off their feet?

5. What did the disciples preach?

### Think about it

It was a custom of the Jews to shake off the dust from their clothing when leaving a foreign land. The Rabbinic law said that when a man entered Palestine after leaving another country, he was to shake off every speck of dust of the heathen land<sup>1</sup>. For Jesus disciples to do this as they departed these Jewish villages was an incredibly significant symbolic action.

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, The gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible, 144.

What do you think it was saying to the people of those villages?

What is the normal or usual way that people hear the message of the kingdom?

In the end why do people miss out on the kingdom of God?

What is involved in repenting?

## Herod

The folly of unbelief means that although the kingdom of God might draw near to us, we can easily miss out on what God is doing. This is especially highlighted in the example of King Herod. Herod is a man who had plenty of opportunity to repent but ultimately refused to do so. Please read chapter 6 verses 14 to 28 to hear how Herod responded when the kingdom drew near to him.

6. When Herod heard about Jesus what did he think of Jesus?

7. Why had Herod imprisoned John?

8. Herod liked to listen to John. He thought him to be a righteous and holy man. Yet in the end Herod had him beheaded. Why in the end did he reject John and his message?

### Think about it

The folly of unbelief is especially seen in the story of Herod. Herod is easily manipulated by those around him. Even though he respected John and liked listening to him he ultimately did not heed his message but had him beheaded.

Why was Herod such a fool and why was he so easily manipulated?

What is that makes men and women like Herod miss out on the kingdom of God and all that God is doing (c/f John 3:19)?

## Conclusion

No one likes missing out but unfortunately many people will miss out on all that God has done for them. This is the folly of unbelief and it has been exposed in the stories of unbelief we read about in chapter 6.

### Think about it

What are the reasons that we have seen people rejecting the message of the kingdom of God?

If it is clear to you that Jesus is far more than just a carpenter what is it that you should be doing?