

Mark 6:1-56

THEME SENTENCE:

Jesus (reveals to his disciples that he) is the Redeemer ... but he (and they) will be rejected.

The Preacher rejected

Here's another of Mark's three-somes: 3 preachers preach the same message (cf Jesus [1:15], the disciples [6:12], John [1:4; 6:18]), with the same result:

6:1-6	the preacher rejected in his home town: Jesus	Jesus' home 'takes offence' (3), and what this means is explained in 5-6. Jesus obviously doesn't 'need' faith to be able to do miracles (cf 4:40); but where people refuse to believe this evidence of who Jesus is (as in 2-3), there's no point in doing them. He still <u>can</u> heal of course, and does (5b)! As 3:14-15 intended, Jesus sends out the 12, ready for rejection. Jews remove 'defiling' dust when leaving a Gentile area; <u>anyone</u> refusing to hear what God says is no less heathen (cf Acts 18:6).
6:7-13,30	the preacher rejected in the villages: the disciples	This chilling essay on rejection shows that sitting on the fence (cf 20) and doing nothing about God's message, comes to the same as bloody rejection: John's the forerunner for all who follow (6:1-6, 11).
6:14-29	the preacher rejected in the palace: John	

Just as the shadow of the cross fell over the page at 3:6, so here's further explanation of what will happen to Jesus: he will suffer, be rejected and killed (8:31).

Application: We can learn not just the pattern for Jesus' ministry, but also the pattern for his disciples: we should expect no less violent/vindictive rejection.

The Redeemer revealed (to his disciples)

This passage seems obtuse to us, mostly because we don't know our Old Testaments very well. Clearly the feeding miracles (- the only miracle to appear in all four gospels, and cf 8:1-10) are very significant (6:52; 8:17-21). But why? What should the disciples have understood about Jesus from seeing this?

The foundation event for the nation of Israel was the Exodus. The Ark of the Covenant, at the heart of the OT people of God, contained three things (cf Hebrews 9:4), of which the pot of manna is the most significant here: this God-provided 'bread from heaven' was kept to forever remind Israel that God had redeemed them (cf Exodus 16:32-34). This is how God wants to be remembered (eg Deut 5:6; Joshua 24:6; 2 Kings 17:7; Nehemiah 9:9-12; etc). As the OT continues, and Israel ended up in exile, passages such as Isaiah 43:14-21; 48:20-21; Jeremiah 31:7-14 promise that God will again come as Redeemer and 'do another Exodus', rescuing them from captivity in a foreign land, taking them through water, and providing for them through the desert.

6:31-44	Jesus feeds the multitude in the wilderness	In simple terms, the feeding miracle is a heavy hint that, because he provides 'bread from heaven' here in the wilderness (32, 35), Jesus is the new-Exodus-performing Redeemer. The disciples can't hope to provide (37), nor are their resources (38b) even the tiniest proportion of the left-overs (43). But Jesus can 'satisfy' (42) for he is the one who has come to completely redeem his people.
6:45-51	Jesus crosses a stretch of water	6:52 is the key verse: if the disciples had understood that the long-awaited second exodus was now happening, they would not have been surprised to see Jesus walking on the water. Uniquely, no-one benefits from this miracle, and Jesus was just going to 'pass by' (48): the miracle is to show the disciples who he is: 'it is I' (50) is literally 'I am' (cf Exod 3:14; 6:6-8).
6:52	... but the disciples do not understand who Jesus is and what he has come to do.	
6:53-56	... and the crowds do not understand who Jesus is and what he has come to do (since they are still clamouring for miracles cf 1:38).	

Application: As we'll see, the disciples misunderstood what they needed to be rescued from, how God would act to rescue them and why Jesus is central to it all ... but at least they were clear on its importance. Today, we've even lost that: there's little real understanding of the importance of being rescued by God. But the danger from which we need rescuing remains just as real and horrific, namely hell. If we do not understand our danger and urgent need for rescue, the cross of Christ becomes irrelevant, and some other role will be invented for Christianity (eg private morality, social justice, personal well-being, etc).