

MARK 6:7-56 – FIVE DIFFERENT REACTIONS TO JESUS

Five different reactions to Jesus. That is what Mark Chapter 6 gives us. The entire chapter shows us five reactions by various groups and individuals to Jesus and we will talk about them. Now, while we will be mostly in this rather long passage in Mark, I will cross-reference against the other three Gospels where it is appropriate just to give a little context.

The first reaction we are going to talk about we actually looked at last time. That was the reaction of Jesus's hometown people to Him. It was a reaction that amazed Jesus. It says in v 3 that the **people of Nazareth** "took offense" at Jesus and that Jesus then "marveled" at their unbelief. So, the first reaction to Jesus by the people of Nazareth that I want you to notice is (Q1)...rejection.

Mark doesn't mention this in his account so we did not talk about it last time, but I just wanted to bring it up. One of the things we said was that the people of Nazareth were probably jealous or whatever of Jesus. But Luke records an incident that also occurred in Nazareth. Bible scholars differ on whether this was the same visit as we talked about last time or it was an earlier visit. After Jesus had finished preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth – this is what Luke records (Luke 4:28-30) – the people of Nazareth tried to kill Jesus. They took Him to the edge of a cliff, remember? They were going to throw Him off but Jesus "passed through their midst." He just disappeared. So, that incident also happened in Nazareth.

So then, the first reaction to Jesus is rejection, this hatred of Jesus to where you don't want anything to do with Him. It must have hurt Jesus, that they would have reacted this way toward Him. Alright, so that is reaction number one which is mostly review from last time.

The second reaction to Jesus I want us to see is that of **John the Baptist**. Earlier in Mark Chapter 1, we observed John the Baptist. He was out preaching out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord." John

was announcing the arrival of their long-awaited Messiah. Mark tells us that, in conjunction with John's message, he was baptizing people for repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. He was preparing God's people, the Jews, spiritually for their Messiah. The people responded positively to John's preaching, right? They came out and they confessed their sins and they were baptized.

At some point Herod Antipas, also known as Herod the Tetrarch, had John the Baptist arrested and thrown into prison. The reason is that John had been openly critical of Herod. Herod didn't like it, so he had John arrested. After his arrest, John's disciples went to Jesus on John's behalf. They wanted to find out for sure who Jesus was. John, understandably, was having a crisis of faith there in prison. He wanted to be absolutely sure that the One he had been pointing the Jewish people to – the One he had referred to as "the Lamb of God, who that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) – that He was indeed the Messiah that they had been waiting for. "Jesus, are You really Him?" That is what John's disciples went to Jesus and asked. Jesus's response to John's question was this: "Just look at the evidence: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:5). In other words, what Jesus was telling John's disciples to tell John was, "I am doing all those things that were prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would do. Just look at the evidence." So, Jesus basically reassures John that He IS the Messiah, which alleviated any doubt that he had. Why did I mention all that? Because it provides really important context for what we are about to read here in Mark Chapter 6. I am actually going to start in v 17...

READ Mark 6:17-18

That is what John had been critical of Herod about – this relationship. John said that it was wrong.

READ Mark 6:19

Herod was protecting John.

READ Mark 6:20

Herod is a conflicted man about John. He doesn't quite know what to think.

READ Mark 6:21-23

She must have been a really good dancer!

READ Mark 6:24-29

So, Q2 what happened to John the Baptist in this passage? He was killed. He lost his head, literally, right? He was executed.

Picture the scene. [This is how I look at it. This is just me. There is nothing in scripture about John's actual death. All we know is that he had his head chopped off.] It's late in the evening and John's cell door opens up. A Roman guard and the executioner walk in. John knows the end has come. Though we are not told the details, I like to imagine that, as John laid his head down on the chopping block, he knew from what Jesus had reported to Him that the One he had pointed his own people to was, in fact, who, Q3? Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

So, John goes to his death with the assurance that the redemption of God's people is close at hand. The Messiah is here. The One John had been pointing the people to is, in fact, the Messiah. John can face his own death with a sense of hope. And so, the life of this truly righteous man comes to an end. The second reaction to Jesus that I want you to notice is John the Baptist and his belief (even though he had a crisis of faith and doubted for a while) in the end that Jesus was in fact who He said He was and that is the Messiah.

The third reaction to Jesus that we see in this chapter is by the antagonist in this story, **Herod Antipas (the Tetrarch)**. He is the bad guy. But he had a reaction to Jesus also as we see earlier in the chapter. We have to actually go back to v 14. I started at v 17 for a reason. I wanted to show you what happened. And then v 14 makes reference to it...

READ Mark 6:14-16

Herod is hearing about all the things Jesus is doing. Jesus is at the peak of His popularity. Word about Him is spreading throughout the region of Galilee into Judea and beyond. When it is all said and done, after careful examination of the evidence, Herod concludes that Jesus is none other than who, Q4? John the Baptist raised from the dead. He believed Jesus was John. It never ceases to amaze me how seemingly intelligent people can come up with such crazy ideas! It actually comes out of their mouth. This guy, to believe that is crazy. The debate among Bible scholars about Herod is whether he really believed this (that Jesus really was John raised from the dead) or if he was just having a guilty conscience about what he had done to John.

Jerry Vines has a strong opinion about this. Let me quote you what he said in his commentary. I like this...

"The last biblical picture of Herod comes in Luke 23:8-11. In that scene, the Lord Jesus... was brought before Herod. [If he has a guilty conscience] this is your chance, Herod; you can tell it all to Jesus. You can silence the voice of your tormented conscience. Admit your sin. Tell [Jesus] you want to be saved." But instead, the Bible says, "When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him. So, he questioned [Jesus] at some length, but He [Jesus] made no answer" (Luke 23:8-9). If you go on and read the rest of the Luke 23 account, v 10-11, Herod actually ends up mocking Jesus before he releases Him back to Pilate.

Jerry Vines' goes on to say, "The Bible says that Jesus answered [Herod] not a word. I think there was no need to. Herod's conscience was long dead and buried." So, his opinion is that there was NO guilty conscience. Herod was just an idiot, basically. The answer to Q5 [when Herod finally met Jesus, what happened?] is... Herod mocked Jesus.

The third reaction to Jesus that I want you to notice, then, is that Herod viewed Jesus as merely an interesting guy, like John the Baptist. Herod was fascinated by all the things that Jesus could do. But he didn't believe any of Jesus's claims. I actually think that Herod's reaction to Jesus is the reaction to Jesus by most people today. They believe that Jesus was a great teacher, a miracle worker, an interesting guy, but they don't believe that He was who He claimed to be. They do not believe that He was and is GOD. So, that is the third reaction.

Reaction number 4 – we are going to spend a little time here because of who it is and that is **the Twelve Disciples**. The disciples are a group of men who have willingly left everything behind to follow Jesus. They know Jesus better than anyone else. They have spent all this time with Him. They know Him. You would think that they would have tremendous faith in Jesus. Well, let's take a closer look at the disciples starting in v 7.

READ Mark 6:7-13

V 30 picks it up and tells you a little bit later what happens when they come back...

READ Mark 6:30-32

They are with Jesus and having this time alone (a retreat away from the crowds). Here the Twelve Disciples are presented in a positive light. To their credit, they have followed Jesus and they are obeying Him. It says that Jesus sent them out in groups of two to do what? To preach repentance. They also cast out demons. They healed people. So then, the only thing they didn't do in Q6 is what? They did not feed the hungry. OK, hold that thought.

The disciples cast out demons! How could they cast out demons? Because Jesus gave them the authority to do it. The disciples returned home from their "mission trip" and reported everything to Jesus. Then they had a sweet time of fellowship with Him. They are on a spiritual "high." So far, so good with the disciples. They are doing everything Jesus told them to do and they are probably amazed that they can do all these things. We

pick it up in v 33. They are still being chased all over the countryside by these crowds. Jesus is at the height of His popularity.

READ Mark 6:33

They know where Jesus is headed so they want to get there early and get a good seat.

READ Mark 6:34-37

How far do you think their limited resources will get them? Jesus feels compassion on these people. He doesn't want them to go away hungry. The disciples have just experienced something amazing in their life. They know that, with God's power, there are some things they can do that they never thought they could do – like casting out demons and healing people. But feeding a crowd of thousands! Come on! The disciples are realistic. "We can do some things, but come on, Jesus!" Feeding a crowd of this size with the limited funds that they have, this is humanly impossible. It is a daunting task. Q7, true or false? Jesus rebukes His disciples for a lack of faith. No. Jesus does NOT rebuke them for a lack of faith. Instead, He asks them a question. And that is the next verse.

READ Mark 6:38

So, basically Jesus asks them to go take inventory. They do that and they report back what they find – "five loaves and two fish." John adds in his Gospel that Andrew spoke up and said, "but what are they for so many?" The disciples recognize the hopelessness of the situation. But Jesus doesn't. And we know the rest of the story, don't we? We know this story. He feeds them, right? We are going to get back to these verses here in a little bit. But Jesus sits them all down. He breaks the bread and feeds the 5000 men (probably 15 to 20 thousand actual people if you count women and children that might have been out there). There were a lot of folks to feed and Jesus did that. They took up 12 baskets full of leftovers. It is a miracle! It is amazing what happens here. Jesus basically creates food out of nothing. That is the miracle, isn't it?

READ Mark 6:45-48

Jesus could have walked on land directly from where He was to Bethsaida and met them there, right?. He didn't have to come out into the Sea of Galilee to the disciples. He didn't have to do that. He came out to them to test them. Will they recognize Him and invite Him into the boat? Well, Q9, what is their reaction when they saw Jesus walking on the water toward them? "Hey Jesus! Come on aboard!" No. Not exactly.

READ Mark 6:49-50a

After spending a full year with Jesus and seeing all the things He had done including the miracle we just saw, the miracle of feeding the 5000. They saw him calm the storm and many other amazing things. But they do not recognize Him. They are frightened. They think He is a ghost.

READ Mark 6:50b-51

Jesus reveals to them who He is and they are OK. The wind ceases and they are astounded. Another amazing thing that Jesus does. They still do not fully understand who Jesus is. We know this because Mark alone (he is the only Gospel writer that does this) adds a little bit of commentary at the end of this story.

READ Mark 6:52

"Their hearts were hardened." So, there you have the answer to Q10 [What word does Mark use to describe the hearts of the 12 disciples?] They were not getting it totally. At this point they should realize that Jesus is God, but they still do not. The disciples have learned a lot from Jesus and about Jesus. They ARE making progress in their spiritual lives. But at this point they still do not grasp the divine nature of Jesus.

Which takes us to the next group that I want to talk about and that is **the Jewish crowds**. This is the fifth group we are going to look at.

Like I said before, Jesus is at the height of His popularity. The Jewish crowds are following Him around wherever He goes. He cannot even get

any time alone. They are everywhere. But the question we have to ask ourselves is why are they following Him? Why are they so interested in Jesus?

I want to go back to the story we just read (I skipped over those verses and I am going to read them now), Jesus feeding the 5000. What I want us to do is look at the CROWD'S perspective of this miracle – from their vantage point how it would have looked. That story began with a statement about Jesus's compassion. It says in v 34 that "He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd..." and He "began to teach them many things." So, the crowd of people listens to Jesus teach all day. Give them some credit. They have a pretty good attention span. They have been listening to Him. It is getting late. Jesus knows they are hungry. We are going to pick it up in v 41...

READ Mark 6:41-44

Suppose you had been part of this crowd and you had witnessed this miracle. What would be your view of Jesus at this point? "This guy is something else!" I'll be honest with you, though. I have been privileged to sit under a lot of wonderful teachers and preachers in my entire life. Not one of them, as wonderful as they were, ever did THIS for me. So, they are thinking, "Wow! This guy is someone special. I need to learn more about Him!" They are intrigued by Jesus – His teaching, His miracle working, everything about Him. That is why they are following wherever He goes. Well, Mark doesn't record the crowd's reaction to what Jesus did, but John does. So, I want to go there next. It goes right along with this story. This is the crowd's reaction after Jesus feeds the 5000...

"When the people saw the sign that He had done [the feeding of the 5000], they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!' Perceiving then that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by Himself" (John 6:14-15). Of course, Mark picks up there where Jesus is in the mountain praying.

The people believe that Jesus IS somebody special, specifically, “the Prophet who is to come into the world. He is the Messiah!” That is what they are thinking. “He has to be!” Jesus knows the common perception by the Jewish people regarding their Messiah is that of a political king. So, what better king can you have in a relatively poor society than one who will feed you. “This is our man! He has got the job!” That is what they are thinking about Jesus. They are thinking in physical terms. The crowd concludes that Jesus is the Messiah and they want to make Jesus their King. That, by the way, is the one thing that Jesus had been trying to avoid. That is why He kept telling people not to say anything about Him.

Being a Jewish king is not Jesus’s mission – not this time. It WILL be next time, when He comes back to earth and reigns in His millennial kingdom, Revelation 20, right? We know that. But that is not why He came the first time. His mission, though it has yet to be revealed, we know (because we have read ahead) is a redemptive mission. Jesus’s eye is on a cross, not a crown. So, it says here that Jesus “withdrew.”

In Mark 6 the chapter closes with a reaction to Jesus by a different Jewish crowd in the town of Gennesaret. So, a different crowd on a different day. This is sometime later, probably soon afterwards, but we do not know exactly when.

READ Mark 6:53-56

The many stories about Jesus, apparently including the one about the woman we looked at last time that simply touched His garment and was healed, have all become known. Those stories have spread all over the region. This crowd has gathered at this little town. They have come from all over. So, Q12, what did the people do when they heard Jesus was coming? They brought sick people to Him. What did they want from Jesus? They wanted to be healed physically, right? Now, does Jesus heal them? Of course He does. He has compassion for people. That is who He is. So, of course He heals them. That is who God is! He is a God of healing. He is a compassionate and merciful God.

By the way, look at our prayer list. We ask God for physical healing all the time ourselves, don't we? Many of our prayer requests are physically related. They have to do with sickness or medical issues or whatever. There is nothing wrong with wanting that. But what you need to see is the deeper truth about Jesus. It is this truth that causes His popularity with the Jewish people to begin to decline. It occurs toward the end of His Galilean Ministry. So, I want to read what happens after Jesus feeds the 5000 in John Chapter 6. This is really important. It has to do with the crowds.

So, recall that the crowds had tried to make Jesus their king, right? And Jesus withdrew. The next day in the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus is preaching... "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man [speaking of Himself] will give to you'" (John 6:26-27)

Many of the same people who had been in the crowd when Jesus had fed the 5000 the previous day have made their way to Capernaum, which is not that far away. They are following Jesus and they are listening to Him preach. Jesus gives His famous Bread of Life discourse. It is a very long passage, very deep and very troubling to a lot of people. The result after He preached that Bread of Life discourse in the synagogue is that most of these people that are listening to Jesus, walk out on Him. What was Jesus's message that made them all want to leave? "I didn't come to feed you physical food. I came to feed you spiritual food." So, meeting physical needs is fine, and Jesus certainly did that. But the truth is that Jesus wants to do more than that. He wants to meet our spiritual needs.

The end of John 6 says this, v 66... "After this many of His disciples [fringe followers] turned back and no longer walked with Him. [This is the beginning of the decline in His popularity] So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God'" (John 6:66-69).

While most of the followers of Jesus (so-called “disciples”) in this large crowd gave up on Jesus and walked out, the Twelve stuck with Him. Let’s give them some credit. Like I said before (I realize I was a little hard on them), their faith may not have been perfect, but they continued to believe in and follow Jesus even though they did not fully understand everything.

So, I am going to wrap things up here. The five reactions to Jesus that we have looked at this morning are not a whole lot different from the reactions to Jesus we observe in our world today. Some, like the people of Nazareth, reject Jesus altogether. “Who do You think You are, Jesus?” Some, like John the Baptist are seekers. They want to know more about Jesus and are searching for the truth. “Who are you, Jesus?” Some, like Herod are intrigued by Jesus superficially. “Will you do a miracle for me, Jesus?” Some are like His disciples. They follow Jesus and commit their lives to Him even if their faith is less than perfect. “What do you want ME to do today, Jesus?” Some are fickle like the Jewish crowds. “What can YOU do for ME, Jesus?”

So, I close with this thought: Which group are you in? What questions are you asking of Jesus? He wants to change your life – not just give you physical blessings, though that may be true; He wants to change you spiritually from the inside out!