

The Kingdom of God is upon You

The largest portion of Christ's ministry is known as the Great Galilean Ministry. It is commonly divided into two parts. The first part is characterized by public preaching, and miracles. The main objective was for Jesus to make the public aware of who he is. Although his popularity grew among many during this time, it was also the time when much of the public grew hostile toward him. The second part of the Galilean Ministry is characterized by Jesus privately training his disciples. This lesson will survey the first part of the Great Galilean Ministry, and the next lesson will survey the second part.

That Jesus performed his first miracle at a party is remarkable. His second miracle was for the royal official's son. The Latin translation (the Vulgate) of this text literally reads, "a petty king." He was most likely an official under Herod in the Galilean region. What is remarkable about his miracle is that this was done for a Gentile. We have already seen Jesus save numerous Samaritans. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus is nothing of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah. As such, he is rejected in his hometown of Nazareth. Like John the Baptist, his claims are Scripturally supported, but offensive to his hearers. It is common for most folks to think of the people they grew up with as the ones they are closest to and most loyal to. The people to whom Jesus spoke thought they knew who he was. "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22). But like the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the people with whom he dwelt did not welcome him, and tried to kill him. For this reason, Jesus relocated to Capernaum.

Fishers of Men

When Jesus arrived at Capernaum, he immediately called four disciples. Andrew and Simon had already been called, but had gone back to their fishing trade. Matthew 4:18 says that Simon was called Peter, which is the name that Jesus gave to him. This indicates that he and Andrew were called a second time. James and John, also fishermen, were also called at this time. So far, there are six of the twelve disciples: Philip, Nathaniel, Andrew, Simon-Peter, James, and John. As is indicated by Matthew and Mark, nets were used for fishing. It would be stretched out between two boats and dragged along to catch fish. Capernaum was a significant fishing town on the major coastal highway (Via

Nazareth is halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the coast. From Nazareth, one can view Mt. Hermon to the north, the Esdraelon Plain to the south, Mt. Tabor to the east, and Mt. Carmel to the west. The town is surrounded by hills except the south which drops down into the Esdraelon Plain over rocky cliffs. Mt. Precipitation is said to be the place where the crowd attempted to kill Jesus (Luke 4:29).



There is one spring
in Nazareth, on
which "Mary's Well"
is now located.



Yes, O yes, this was His home
Here it was His life was spent,
He did thro' this valley roam,
O'er these hills He often went.

Subject to His parents' will,
Here He toiled the livelong day,
Thinking of His mission still,
Of His home so far away.

At that fountain slaked His thirst
With his mother by His side-
'This the only one that bursts
Out from all the green hillside.

From this city He was cast
Fiercely to yon mountain's brow,
But He quickly through them passed,
In a way they knew not how.

EP Hammond, *Sketches of Palestine*
(T. Nelson & Sons, 1869), 64-65.

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Maris). However, the men Jesus called were fishermen, who certainly did not belong to the upper class.

Power over Demons and Diseases

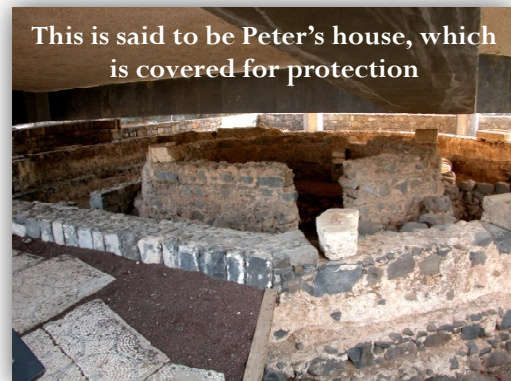
Unlike the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus' teachings were not immediately offensive to those who lived there. For one thing, Matthew says this is a fulfillment of a prophecy from Isaiah 9:1-2 (Matthew 4:15-16). Secondly, his teachings were validated by signs that he gave. Both Mark (1:22) and Luke (4:32) indicate that Jesus was teaching with authority. This was actually demonstrated by the rebuking of a demon. Luke tells us that there had been several persons with demons (4:41). Jesus was not just performing a wonder to show his power. He was specifically showing his authority over the spiritual realm. On the same Sabbath that Jesus taught in the synagogue, he healed Peter's mother. When you become well from being sick in bed, you do not recover instantaneously. But with Peter's mother, the symptoms of her fever were immediately gone. She was so well that she was able to cook for them. Notice two things. First, there were no modern medicines in those days. Having a fever might have meant death. Remember that a fever killed Alexander the Great. Second, cooking in the ancient world was very rigorous. Everything was made from scratch. No refrigerators, conventional ovens, and no, not even microwaves. Both of these realities in the ancient world magnify the healing power of Jesus.

Tour of Galilee

As stated above, the three tours of the Galilean Ministry are characterized by public teaching and miracles. It was at this time that Jesus left Capernaum and began to travel around the Galilean region. After teaching, Jesus showed his power over nature again when Peter and his partners caught so much fish that their net began to break (Luke 5). As you can see, Jesus used this occasion to call these men again. He wanted them to follow him, but they had gone back to fishing. Although Jesus' popularity continued to grow, his actions also earned the contempt of the public. As you have seen, Jesus seems to talk to the outcasts of society. By being near the leper that he healed (Mt 8, Mk 4, Lk 5), he was putting himself in danger of being unclean. His next miracle would intensify the disdain of the leaders. From wherever he and his disciples were located, they traveled across Galilee by boat to Capernaum.



This synagogue in Capernaum dates to the 3rd century AD. It may have been built on the synagogue of the New Testament as its foundation is made of basalt.



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While he was teaching, a paralytic was brought to Jesus by his friends. What marks this miracle as a new aspect to Jesus' ministry is that he forgives the man's sin. Jesus did not just come to heal, but to forgive sin. By claiming this kind of authority, he was claiming to be God. While still in Capernaum, Jesus went toward the water and called Levi (Matthew, who wrote the Gospel) to follow him. However, what was more controversial for the Jews was that Jesus dined with Levi and his guests. Matthew and Luke tell us that the Pharisees were complaining to the disciples that Jesus was eating with "tax gatherers and sinners." "Sinners" does not refer to how we generically use the word. It was a social term that included publicans and prostitutes. In the eyes of the religious leaders, there was no hope for "sinners." The first tour closes with three short parables that Jesus gives to explain why he was not fasting like the Pharisees and disciples (Mt 8, Mk 2, Lk 5).

Sabbath Breakers?

John 5 picks up where the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) leave us at the end of the first tour. Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for a feast, possibly the Passover, or Tabernacles. He met a man at the Pool of Bethesda, which is where the infirmed would spend their time. The portion of verses 3 and 4 speaking about the Spirit's movement of the water is probably not a genuine part of John's writings. Nevertheless, Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath, for which the Jews sought to kill him. Remember that Jesus was in Jerusalem. The threat of execution was much higher than in the Galilean region, where the population was not as dense, or as formally oriented with Jewish authority. Jesus was also speaking of God as his Father, which meant that he was equal with God. The Jews also wanted to kill him for that. Appropriate for the occasion, Jesus gave a discourse on the subject of his equality with God. Matthew (12), Mark (3), and Luke (6) describe two other events which Jesus did on the Sabbath. It is most likely that both of these took place back in Galilee, not just the second one. You must understand what it meant to

"break the Sabbath" in New Testament times. As was mentioned in Lesson 5, the Pharisees had numerous traditions which they added to Scripture (up to 1,500 in number). Regarding the Sabbath, Jewish leaders thought it necessary to protect it by adding extra laws that apply to it. For example, restrictions were made on how far one could travel, or how much one could carry. In the situation of Jesus and his disciples snacking on grain, they were breaking at least four Pharisee laws by picking, rubbing (threshing), winnowing, and preparing food. In the minds of the Pharisees, breaking the Sabbath made one a "sinner." As with the man whose hand Jesus healed on the Sabbath, notice that the Pharisees are more concerned that Jesus did work on the Sabbath than the fact that he not only helped a man, but did something supernatural. While Jesus continued to become more hated by the Jewish leaders, Mark and Matthew tell us that Gentiles from surrounding regions were coming to follow Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21).



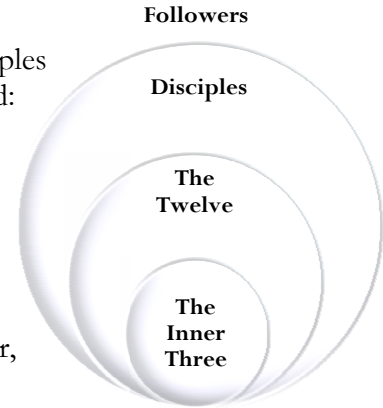
At this point, the following actions had put Jesus in opposition to the Pharisees:

1. Forgiving sin
2. Befriending sinners
3. Not fasting
4. Healing on the Sabbath
5. Working on the Sabbath
6. Claiming equality with God

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The Twelve

Prior to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus appointed twelve of his disciples to preach publicly. At this time, there are five new disciples introduced: Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Bartholomew is the same person as Nathaniel in the Gospel of John. He is always mentioned with Philip. Thaddaeus is the same person as Judas the son of James. When the Gospels refer to the disciples, it is not always being specific to the twelve that Jesus had chosen. Disciple is often used as a generic term to refer to the people who followed Jesus closely. You will eventually see that Peter, James and John were chosen among the twelve as the “inner three.”



The Sermon on the Mount

It is likely that the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6 and Matthew 5-7 are the same event. However, they could have been different events with similar content. The pictures below are of the Mount of Beatitudes, which is the most likely location for the Sermon on the Mount to have taken place. Jesus would have stood on the hill, which would have provided good amplification for his audience. The content of the Lord's sermon is especially fitting for what has gone on prior to this time. Rather than imposing the outward conformities of the Pharisees, Jesus taught about matters of the heart. These conformities were regulated through Pharisaical traditions which Jesus was also teaching against.



Gentiles and Widows

After teaching the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing matters of the heart, we see an ideal example in the Centurion, whose servant Jesus healed. This is why Jesus says, “I have not found such faith with anyone in Israel.” (Matthew 8:10). When Jesus went to Nain to raise the widow's son, this no doubt evokes the story of Elisha raising the widow's son in Shunem (2 Kings 4). What is remarkable is that Nain and Shunem are very close together. This made Jesus' miracle even more obvious to the locals, which is why they said, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” (Luke 7:16).

Before the next transition, there are three things that take place. First, John the Baptist receives assurance from Jesus that he is the “Expected One” (Matthew 11:3). Perhaps John's continued imprisonment was creating doubt in him. Second, Jesus condemned three towns: Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin (Korazin). Up to this point, Jesus had spent much time in these towns, yet they were unrepentant for their sin. When Jesus pronounces woes, you need to understand how serious this is. The word “woe” does not have the same nuance today as it had then. To make it clear: Jesus is pronouncing damnation. The third thing that took place was the woman's washing of Jesus' feet with her tears. You need to understand that when people dined they were not sitting in chairs at a table. They would lie on their front side, and prop up their upper body. They would do this because everyone wore sandals outside, which meant that their feet became very dirty. Since no one likes stinky feet, especially during a meal, they were kept away. Now you have a clear picture of how the woman was washing Jesus' feet. Hopefully, you also have a clear idea of how grateful she was for Jesus forgiving her sin.

The Kingdom of God is upon You

In the Lord's second tour of Galilee, we are first introduced to new followers of Jesus. These include: Mary Magdalene, and three other women (Luke 9:1-3). After this, it is noted that scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem to find Jesus. This is extremely significant. Going from Jerusalem to Galilee takes a considerable amount of walking. They had been after Jesus for a while, but their journey indicates that Jesus has become very popular by this point in time. Though he had been able to avoid arrest or execution, he actually called them to come to him in response to their accusation (Mark 3:23). Religious leaders had previously accused Jesus of blasphemy. But the accusation that he was of Satan had heightened tension. This event is a crucial turning point in the relationship between Jesus and the religious leaders. Because of his widespread popularity, Jesus had become a major threat to the Pharisees and scribes. They were now fully motivated to eliminate him. Jesus clearly saw through their evil motives when they asked him for a sign (Matthew 12:36-45). Not only from the Pharisees' standpoint, but from Jesus also, there is complete opposition. Notice that he is not against them for their attempt to eliminate him, but for their hardness of heart. This is the occasion when Jesus taught in many parables regarding the kingdom. Remember what kind of kingdom the Jews were looking for. It is very common for many to think of the parables as illustrations of a spiritual truth. This is partially true. Parable comes from *parabolē* (parabole). It literally means, "to place together, or to compare." A parable is spoken in order to give an example, comparison, or illustration of an idea, or moral. However, Jesus did not give his parables in order for the masses to understand. On the contrary, he was teaching so that they would not understand. We know this because he says this exactly. "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." (Matthew 13:13). The text that Jesus cited from Isaiah is one in which God told the prophet to preach to Israel as a judgment (Isaiah 6:9-10). Jesus did the same thing here. He taught in parables as a judgment.

The taming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee is commonly thought of this way: when the storm came, the disciples got really scared, because they knew that their lives were in danger. Then when Jesus calmed the storm, they were okay. That explanation misses an important detail. After Jesus had calmed the storm, the disciples became more scared! Mark 4:41 says, "And they became very much afraid..." It is normal for storms to take place, especially on the Sea of Galilee. But for a man to command a storm is an absolute terror. Unlike the previous encounters with demoniacs, the one that Jesus approached at Gerasene was an extreme case. This was in Gentile country, which is indicated by presence of the swine. When Jesus freed this man from bondage, it was an equally terrifying experience. There is no doubt that the demon possessed man was a fright to society. However, when Jesus demonstrated his mighty power over the evil spirits, the locals were given more reason for fear (Matthew 8:34). When Jesus crossed back over the lake, we find a crowd waiting for him. You will see what they were really interested in, in a later section. A synagogue official asked that Jesus come to heal his daughter. On his way to do so, Jesus discovered that a woman with continual bleeding touched his garment. As we see, Jesus had no magical power. Rather, her faith made her well (Luke 8:48). By the time Jesus got to the house the official's daughter had died. At the house there were "mourners." Mourners would intentionally moan and wail when someone died to heighten sympathy and sorrow. However, they were anything but sympathetic as is seen when they instantly turned to laughing at Jesus' words (Luke 8:52-53). Nearing the end of this period, two blind men are healed by Jesus, but against his warning, these men spread this news everywhere. In response to Jesus freeing a man from a demon, the Pharisees again attribute the power of Christ to the devil (Matthew 9:34). Just as the Lord had said, "...The

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heart of this people has become dull...” (Matthew 13:15). Especially with regard to the last two text references, you need to keep in mind that Matthew’s Gospel is not completely arranged in chronological order. The events as presented in Mark, Luke, and this lesson are more chronologically arranged.

Home Sweet Home

At this time, Jesus went back to Nazareth (Matthew 13, Mark 6). His life was not threatened this time. However, as he was teaching in the synagogue, the people took offence to what he was teaching. How could Jesus the carpenter be saying these things? For this reason, he performed no miracles as with the unbelieving Pharisees. When most people go back to their hometown after being gone for some time, they may have warm memories of childhood as an effect of being homesick. Jesus did not have this experience. Those who knew him in his youth were the most offended by him. As it is said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.” (Matthew 13:57). At this point, even the family of Jesus was offended by him. However, I am not convinced that Mary would have subscribed to such criticism. Nearly everything in the Gospels gives us a positive impression of her character and faith.

Withdrawing to Galilee

As the first portion of the Great Galilean Ministry transitions to the second half, Jesus had commissioned his disciples to heal and cast out unclean spirits a second time (Mt 10, Mk 6, Lk 9). After Jesus sent them out, he went to preach throughout Galilee again. We see how popular Jesus became during this time. We also see how strategic Christ’s plan was. Knowing the greater context of biblical geography, one might assume the Messiah would manifest himself in Jerusalem. However, Jesus spent the majority of his time in a place that had not been given much attention in biblical history. Had the Lord spend much time in Jerusalem, chaos would have risen to an insurmountable level. This is not because Jesus wanted to cause trouble....well, in a way he did. Remember the numerous occasions when he provoked the Pharisees on the Sabbath. But Jesus was not doing that to get on their nerves. He was doing that to confront their artificial worship. As was mentioned, if Jesus had gone about healing and forgiving in Judea, from a human standpoint, he would have been quickly executed. Additionally, the Romans would have made every effort to put a stop to any kind of “Jewish uprising.” But it was not until this point that Herod became aware of Jesus, and mistook him for John the Baptist (Mt 14, Mk 6, Lk 9). For that reason Matthew and Mark inform us of the cruel death of John that had taken place before this point. When the disciples returned to Jesus, they reported everything that took place while they were out. Jesus then withdrew to Galilee for the second phase of this ministry.

Reading Assignment: Acts 13-18; 1 & 2 Thessalonians; Galatians

Greek	Pronunciation	English	Part of Speech
basileia	bas-il-ey-a	kingdom, realm	noun
maqthar	mawth-ay-tayce	disciple	noun
grafw	graw-pho	I write	verb
amhn	aa-main	truly, amen	adverb
parabolh	para-bole-ay	parable	noun
blepw	blepo	I see	verb