

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 19

Date: 28 AD

The Ministry of Christ in Galilee – Spring 28 AD

The Calling of the Twelve

The last lesson focused on the teaching of Christ during the spring of 28 AD. We looked at the two texts in Matthew and Luke which encapsulate the heart of all His public teaching. Although they were clearly two different events, they are both often called the Sermon on the Mount, although I chose to call the message in Luke the Sermon on the Plain. I chose to cover both of those messages in the same lesson because it made sense. However, the Sermon on the Plain message evidently occurred later. In the beginning of this lesson we will take a short look at what we know of the personal history of the Twelve apostles that Jesus called just before the Sermon on the Plain.

Since we are trying to keep track of the chronology of the life of Christ, it should be noted that the calling of the Twelve occurred after the crossing of the Sea of Galilee taught later in this series.¹ That calling was described in both Mark and Luke as recorded below:

Mark 3:13-19 **Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve--designating them apostles --that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

Luke 6:12-16 **One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**

As you can read, they were first called “disciples.” The Greek word is μαθητής {mä-thā-tā's} which means “one who has learned.”² Later they were called “apostles.” The Greek word is ἀπόστολος {ä-po'-sto-los} which means “one set apart” or “one sent out.”

¹ Also, the events of Matthew 12-13, Mark 3 and 4, and Luke 5:1 thru 8:21 probably occurred during this early part of the long Galilean ministry.

² Interestingly it is from the same root as “mathematics” which is from the Greek μάθημα {máthēma} which means “knowledge, study, learning.”

The Twelve are also listed in Matthew 10:2-4 and Acts 1:13. In every list in the gospels, Peter was listed first, as were the first six who joined Him during the first year of His ministry immediately after His return from His temptation in the desert. They were Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew. Most of them were known to each other before their discipleship. The two sets of brothers Peter and Andrew and James and John had all four been partners in the business of catching fish. James and John were also first cousins of Jesus although they hadn't been aware of their relationship before the wedding at Cana. All of the first six were fishermen from the villages of Capernaum and Bethsaida which were close together on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee.

Of the twelve, all but Judas Iscariot were from Galilee. Judas Iscariot was from Judea. According to Edersheim,³ the name Iscariot comes from the Aramaic "Ish Kerioth," which means 'a man of Kerioth.' Kerioth was a town in Judea.⁴

Below I have short sketches of the background and history of the other eleven disciples:

1. Simon (called Peter or Cephas)⁵- He was the brother of Andrew, and his father was named John. He was one of "the Three" who were in the most intimate circle of the Lord. He was one of the first six disciples of Jesus. Along with his brother and Philip he was originally from Bethsaida (the Romans called it Julias), which was a Jewish-Syrian ⁶ city on the Sea of Galilee in Trachonitus.⁷ He shared a home in Capernaum with his wife, his mother-in-law, and his brother Andrew. Probably because he was already married and already had his own home, he was traditionally thought to have been one of the oldest of the disciples. He must have learned to speak some Greek as a youth, like Philip and Andrew. He was a fisherman, and he and his brother Andrew were business partners with James and John and their father Zebedee. He was the one who walked on water for a

³ In his book *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

⁴ Joshua 15:25.

⁵ "Simon" is from the Hebrew name שִׁמְעוֹן {shim-ōn'} or Simeon (the name of Jacob's second son). It is from the Hebrew root word שָׁמַע {shā-mah'} which means "hear." As recorded in the Gospels, Jesus always addressed Peter by his birthname of Simon.

"Peter" is the English version of the Greek name Πέτρος {pe'-tros} which is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic name Jesus gave him which was "Cephas." (John 1:42 "And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter)."

Both Peter and Cephas mean "stone."

⁶ Its population was about half Jewish and half Greek speaking Syrian (the ancient name was Aram).

⁷ *Wars of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus Book 3, Chapter 3, Verse 5 "This [Trachonitus] country begins at Mount Libanus, and the fountains of Jordan, and reaches breadthways to the lake of Tiberias; and in length is extended from a village called Arpha, as far as Julias."

short time, but lost confidence and began to sink. He was the first to confess Jesus as the Messiah. He rebuked the Lord for prophesying that He would be killed. With John he helped prepare the Passover dinner. He was one of the three that Jesus asked to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden, he struck the High Priest's servant with a sword and cut off his ear. He denied Jesus in the High Priest's courtyard. After the third day He went to Jesus' tomb with John and Mary Magdalene. He was also one of the ten who didn't believe in the women's testimony of the Resurrection until He had seen the risen Jesus himself. After the Resurrection, he was with the disciples who saw Jesus at the Sea of Galilee while fishing. In the early years of the Church he often was accompanied by John. He was characterized as an "unschooled, ordinary man" by the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:13). He healed the sick, raised the dead, and witnessed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for the Gentiles in Cornelius' house. He was an early leader of Jerusalem church along with John and James the Lord's half-brother. He visited Paul in Antioch and spent a fair amount of time there. He then went to Babylon, where Mark later joined him. He probably went to Rome with Mark at the time of Paul's request to Timothy to send Mark. As John reports (John 21:18-19), he died a martyr's death, reportedly in Rome. Tradition says he insisted on being crucified upside down, because he wasn't worthy to die in the same way as His Lord. He wrote I Peter and II Peter. He was also undoubtedly one of the eyewitness sources for the Gospels of both Mark and Luke.

2. Andrew ⁸ - He was a brother of Peter, the son of John. He was one of the first two disciples of Jesus (along with John). He had been a disciple of John the Baptist. Along with his brother and Philip he was originally from Bethsaida (Julias), a Jewish-Syrian city on the Sea of Galilee in Trachonitus.⁹ He shared a home with Peter and his wife and mother-in-law in Capernaum. He was evidently close to Philip. He was probably paired with James. He was not included in "the Three" though he was Peter's brother. It is believed that after Our Lord ascended into Heaven, St. Andrew went to Greece to preach the gospel. According to tradition, he was put to death on a cross, to which he was tied, not nailed. He lived two days in that state of suffering, still preaching to the people who gathered around their beloved Apostle.

⁸ "Andrew" is the English version from the Greek Ἀνδρέας {än-dre'-äs}, which means "manly." Although he was a native Palestinian Jew he bore a Greek name. In Galilee, the population was a mixture of Greek and Aramaic speakers. Perhaps as many as 40% of the inhabitants spoke Greek as their first language. Many Jews living there spoke both languages. Perhaps the influence of Greek was why Galileans spoke Aramaic with a distinctive pronunciation (Acts 2:7).

⁹ *Wars of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus Book 3, Chapter 3, Verse 5 "This [Trachonitus] country begins at Mount Libanus, and the fountains of Jordan, and reaches breadthways to the lake of Tiberias; and in length is extended from a village called Arpha, as far as Julias."

3. James ¹⁰ - He was the son of Zebedee, and the brother of John. He was probably the older of the two. The two together were called by Jesus “Boanerges.” “Boanerges” means Sons of Thunder. He was the first cousin of Jesus. He was one of “the Three” who were the most intimate circle of the Lord. He was one of those three that Jesus asked to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. With his brother John, he was a fishing partner with Peter and Andrew. He was present at the miraculous draught of fish. He was one of the first six disciples of Jesus. After the resurrection, he was with the disciples on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus appeared to them. His martyrdom in Jerusalem in 44 AD was the first martyrdom of the Twelve to be recorded in Scripture. His mother had once asked Jesus for his preferment.

4. John ¹¹ - He was the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. James and John together were called by Jesus “Boanerges.” “Boanerges” means “Sons of Thunder.” He was one of the first two disciples and the last living disciple. He is thought to have lived past one hundred. He was traditionally thought to be the youngest of the disciples. He was the first cousin of Jesus. He was one of “the Three” who were the most intimate circle of the Lord. He and his brother James were a fishing partners with Peter and Andrew. He was present at the miraculous draught of fish. With Peter he helped prepare the Passover dinner. He was one of the three that Jesus asked to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. On early resurrection Sunday morning, he and Peter were told about the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene and ran to see it. After the Resurrection, he was with the disciples at the Sea of Galilee. He was a leader of the Jerusalem church with Peter, his brother James, and James the Lord’s brother. In the early years of the Church he often accompanied Peter though Peter always seemed to do the talking. He met with Paul when he came to Jerusalem for the Council of Jerusalem. He spent most of his last decades centered in Ephesus. His maternal Grandfather was of the Aaronic line of priests.¹² Perhaps this was why he was known to the High Priest as recorded in John (John 18:15). He was characterized by the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas an “unschooled, ordinary man” (Acts 4:13). His mother, Jesus’ aunt, asked Jesus for the preferment of her two sons. He wrote the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John, and Revelation which made up 19% of the New Testament. He seems to have been the only one of the disciples not to have died a martyr’s death, although according to

¹⁰ “James” is actually, the Greek name Ἰάκωβος {ē-ä'-kō-bos}. It is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew name “Jacob” יַעֲקֹב {yah-ak-ōve'} which means “to take by the heel.” Jacob of course was the name of the great patriarch of Israel.

¹¹ “John” is the Greek name Ἰωάννης {ē-ō-ä'n-nās}. It is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew name Johanan יוֹחָנָן {yō-khä-nän'} which means “Jehovah has been gracious.” It was the name of fourteen Israelites in the Old Testament.

¹² We know this because his aunt Mary, and her aunt Elizabeth were descended from Aaron (Luke 1:5).

tradition the Romans had thrown him into a vat of boiling oil with no effect in about 95 AD. It was then that he was exiled to the Island of Patmos where he was given the vision of Revelation.

5. Philip ¹³ – He was one of the first six disciples of Jesus. Along with Peter and James he was originally from Bethsaida (also called Julias by the Romans), a Jewish-Syrian city on the Sea of Galilee in Trachonitus. It is said that some Greeks came to Philip, who must have known Greek well, to ask to see Jesus on Palm Sunday. He may have previously been a disciple of John the Baptist and is mentioned as one of the Apostles in the lists of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in Acts. Aside from the lists, he is mentioned only in John in the New Testament. He was called by Jesus Himself and Philip then brought his friend Nathanael to Christ. Philip was present at the miracle of the loaves and fishes, when he engaged in a brief dialogue with the Lord. Just before the Passion, Jesus answered Philip's query to show them the Father, but no further mention of Philip is made in the New Testament beyond his listing in Acts as being among the Apostles awaiting the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. According to tradition he preached in Greece and was crucified upside down at Hierapolis (80 miles east of Ephesus) under the Emperor Domitian who reigned from 81 to 96 AD.
6. Bartholomew (also called Nathanael) ¹⁴ – He was from Cana in Galilee. He was one of the first six disciples of Jesus. After the resurrection, he was one of the disciples who saw Jesus at the Sea of Galilee. All that is known of him with certainty is that he is mentioned in the synoptic gospels and Acts as one of the twelve apostles. His name, a patronymic, means "son of Tolomai" and scholars believe he is the same as Nathanael mentioned in John, who said he was from Cana and that Jesus called him an "Israelite...incapable of deceit." The Roman Martyrology says he preached in India and Greater Armenia, where he was flayed and beheaded by King Astyages at Abanopolis on the west coast of the Caspian Sea. Tradition says that he also preached in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt.
7. Matthew (Levi) ¹⁵ - He is thought to have been brother of the disciples Thomas

¹³ "Phillip" is the Greek name Φίλιππος {fē'-lēp-pos} which means "lover of horses." Although he was a Palestinian Jew he bore a Greek name.

¹⁴ "Bartholomew" is the English form of the Greek name whose spelling is Βαρθολομαῖος {bār-tho-lo-mī'-os}. It is derived from the Hebrew name תַּלְמַיִר {bar-talmi} which means "son of Talmi." Talmi was a Gentile name of uncertain meaning.

Nathaniel is the Greek spelling of the name Ναθαναήλ {nä-thä-nä-ā'l}. It is derived from the Hebrew name מְתַנָּחֵל {methanals'} which means "gift of God."

¹⁵ Matthew is the English form of the Hellenized name Μαθθαῖος {māth-thī'-os}. It is thought to be a diminutive of the Hebrew מַתְתָּיָה {mat-tith-yä'} which means "gift of the LORD."

and James.¹⁶ He was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). He was a tax collector and lived in Capernaum. He threw a party for Jesus and his own tax collecting friends which probably included his two brothers. His apostolic activity was at first restricted to the communities of Palestine. Nothing definite is known about his later life from Scripture. There is a tradition that points to Ethiopia as his later field of labor although other traditions mention Parthia and Persia. It is uncertain whether he died a natural death or received the crown of martyrdom. He wrote the Gospel of Matthew which was the first book of the New Testament. Writing for his fellow Jews, Matthew composed his Gospel in his native Aramaic, the “Hebrew tongue” mentioned in the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. According to Papias, it was then translated into the Greek version that we possess. Soon afterward, about the time of the persecution of Herod Agrippa I in 42 AD and the martyrdom of James, he took his departure for other lands. Without question, Matthew’s Gospel, depicting the Holy City with its altar and temple as still existing, and without any reference to the fulfillment of our Lord’s prophecy of its destruction, shows that it was written before the destruction of the city by the Romans in 70 AD. This internal evidence confirms the traditions of its early writing.

8. Thomas (Didymus) ¹⁷ - He was thought to be brother of Matthew, and James. After the Resurrection, he was with the fishing disciples at the Sea of Galilee when they saw Jesus. Tradition says that at the dispersal of the Apostles he was sent to evangelize the Parthians, Medes, and Persians; he ultimately reached India, carrying the Faith to the Malabar coast (southwest coast of India), which still boasts a large native population calling themselves “Christians of St. Thomas.” His converts eventually carried the gospel to the heartlands of north central Asia and to the Mongols. He capped his life by shedding his blood for his Master, speared to death at a place called Calamine in India.

Levi is the English form of the Hellenized name Λεβίς {le-wē's} derived from the Hebrew name לֵוִי {lā-vē'} which means “joined to.” It was the name of the son of Jacob whose tribe became the priests and Levites.

¹⁶ *“From the circumstance that in the lists of the apostles he (James) is always mentioned along with Matthew, who was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), and that these two are always followed by James, who was also the son of Alphaeus, it has been supposed that these three, Matthew, Thomas, and James, were brothers.”*
Easton Bible Encyclopedia

¹⁷ *Thomas is the Greek name Θωμάς {thō-mä's} from the Hebrew תָּמָר (tam') which in Hebrew means “twin.” In John’s gospel, wherever Thomas appears he is also called by the Greek name Δίδυμος {dē-dü-mos} which in Greek also means “twin.” That would seem to indicate that he could have been the twin of either Matthew or James.*

9. James ¹⁸ – He was the son of Alphaeus the father of Matthew. He was thought to be brother of both Thomas and Matthew. He was called “son of Alphaeus” to differentiate him from the other James who was “the son of Zebedee.” He was quite possibly a tax collector like his brother Matthew. The scriptures say virtually nothing about him after the day of Pentecost. Legend says that James was of the tribe of Gad, and was stoned by the Jews for preaching Christ, and was buried by the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

10. Judas - ¹⁹ He was called “the son of James” to differentiate him from Judas Iscariot. He was also called Thaddaeus (meaning breast) and Lebbaeus (meaning heart). These may have been descriptive designations of Judas introduced in the gospels to avoid confusion with the traitor and because of the odium attached to that name. The scriptures say virtually nothing about him after the day of Pentecost. Legend says he was beaten to death with a club, then beheaded post-mortem in 1st century Persia.

11. Simon the Zealot ²⁰ - He was possibly from the area around Nazareth and Sepphoris, which was where the Zealot movement was strongest. The scriptures say virtually nothing about him after the day of Pentecost. Western tradition is that he preached in Egypt and then went to Persia with St. Jude (Jesus’ half-brother), where both suffered martyrdom. Eastern tradition says Simon died peacefully at Edessa in upper Mesopotamia (now eastern Turkey).

The Bible itself is silent on the actual ministries and fates of most of the eleven disciples. In the book of Acts, they all appear just after the Ascension waiting for Pentecost in Jerusalem. After that, only Peter, James, and John are mentioned. We know that Matthew subsequently wrote the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew. Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James are never mentioned again. The ministries

¹⁸ “James” is actually, the Greek name Ἰάκωβος {ē-ä'-kō-bos}. It is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew name “Jacob” יַעֲקֹב {yah-ak-ōve'} which means “to take by the heel.” Jacob of course was the name of the great patriarch of Israel.

¹⁹ Judas is the English version of the Greek name Ἰούδας {ē-ü'-däs} which is from the Hebrew name יהודה {yeh-hü-dä'} which means “praised.” It was the name of Judah, son of Jacob (Israel). It was one of the names most frequently used by the Jews.

²⁰ “Simon” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name שִׁמְעוֹן {shim-ōn'} or Simeon (the name of Jacob’s second son). It is from the Hebrew root word שָׁמַע {shä-mah'} which means “hear.” The “Zealots” were the most radical of the sects in 1st Century Israel. They hated the Gentiles and took the view it was better to destroy themselves and all Israel rather than serve the Romans. They were the ones who started the revolt against the Romans in 66 AD and were responsible for shutting-up the million Jews caught in Jerusalem at the Passover of 70 AD and starving them to death. They were strongest in the part of Galilee surrounding Nazareth.

that Acts mentions are almost exclusively the ministries of those who God chose to write scripture. This included Peter and John. Acts also mentions the ministries of the authors of all the other New Testament epistles. That included James and Jude, the Lord's half-brothers. It also included Mark and Luke, and of course, Paul. It is thus obvious that God intended for Acts to give us a context for interpreting the Epistles written by those men. It is only a very partial history of the first century Church which spread not only to the west to Europe, but east to Persia, India, and China; north to the steppes of central Asia; and south to Africa and Arabia. It should also be noted that although of the original eleven only Peter was specifically described as having a wife, Paul gave this description of the married status of the other Apostles:

1 Corinthians 9:5 "Don't we (Paul and Timothy) have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?"

The Ministry of Christ in Galilee – Spring 28 AD

The following pages contain some of the incidents and teachings of Christ during that time in Galilee. In the various Gospels, they aren't always delivered in the same order although when the order differs the specific sequence of them isn't given in the text. For example, the sequence is indicated when the text says something like, "the next day Jesus." On the other hand, the sequence isn't indicated when the text says something like, "one day Jesus." In deciding how to teach them in this study I decided to group the same events together regardless of the order they were recorded in the Gospel in which they appeared. You will see that method below. As you will see, my commentary is far from exhaustive, but I hope it is useful.

Matthew 8:1-4 **"When he came down from the mountainside (*sequence indicated*),²¹ large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'"**

Mark 1:40-45 **"A man with leprosy came to him (*sequence not indicated*) and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.' Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a**

²¹ This was after His Sermon on the Mount, but before His Sermon on the Plain when He appointed His Twelve Disciples. That clearly occurred after His first recorded encounter with Matthew which occurred shortly after this encounter with the leper.

result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.”

Luke 5:12-16 “While Jesus was in one of the towns (*sequence not indicated*), a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, ‘Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.’ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

The sacrifices / gifts that Jesus spoke about is recorded in Leviticus:

Leviticus 14:3-7 “The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields.”

This offering was full of figures foreshadowing Jesus’ sacrifice that would make us spiritually clean. The cedar wood stood for the cross. It was almost certainly the type of wood of which Jesus’ cross was made. When Christ was crucified, the Roman soldiers used a hyssop shoot to lift up the sponge to His lips so He could cry out “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” and “It is finished.” In that offering there was also blood and water mixed together. That represented the blood and water that came out of Jesus Christ when he was pierced by the Roman spear (John 19:34). The death of the clean bird symbolized the death of the perfect one who came down from heaven. The clay pot symbolized Christ’s human body (Adam was originally formed out of clay). Finally, the live bird was freed to ascend to the sky symbolizing Christ’s resurrection and ascension.

I think this incident is recorded in the Gospels to give us an idea how difficult Jesus’ ministry was. He came to present the Word of Eternal Healing but He couldn’t get an audience for the Gospel unless He performed a miracle. When He did perform a miracle the people were more interested in the miracles than the message and they come in such numbers for the physical miracles that He could hardly preach about the far more important spiritual miracle that He was going to perform for them on the Cross.

The healing described was also a figure of what Jesus' was going to do. Leprosy was considered certain death. The leper expressed faith that Jesus could defeat that death. The entire human race is born spiritually dead. If we trust that Jesus has defeated it for us, He can heal us by crediting us with His righteousness.

Mark 2:1-12 ~~A few days later~~ *After some days,*²² when Jesus again entered Capernaum (*time clearly indicated*), the people heard that ~~he had come home~~ *he was in a building.*²³ So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.²⁴ Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit²⁵ that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins²⁶. . . .' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.²⁷ This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'"

Luke 5:17-26 "One day (*sequence not indicated*) as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem,²⁸ were sitting there.²⁹ And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. Some men

²² Literally, "after days."

²³ Literally, the Greek is εἰς οἶκον ἐστὶν "he was in a house (or building)."

²⁴ I can't help speculating that the crowd was so great because His disappearance in the storm and absence for two days (Lesson 23) had made some realize that they couldn't take His presence for granted.

²⁵ This does not imply the function of the omniscience of Jesus' deity, which He had laid aside, only that He had been informed either by the Holy Spirit, or by His ability to read the faces of people and by His prior experience with this issue.

²⁶ In other words, they would be forced to reason that God would never provide a validating miracle to someone who had just blasphemed.

²⁷ This included all those who had gathered outside and had only seen them carrying the man onto the roof.

²⁸ If this is true, and it is, there could not have been less than fifty people who were seated in front of Jesus. This further establishes the size of the building in which He was teaching.

²⁹ Notice that Jesus had not only aroused the interest of the people, but the religious leadership were also sending representatives to see what He was saying. This was the group he had left two days before to cross the lake.

came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him ~~into the house~~ *in*³⁰ to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, ‘Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, ‘Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . .’ He said to the paralyzed man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’”

Of course, when Jesus asked the question “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’” He knew that the Pharisees thought it would be impossible to make the paralytic walk. In fact, for Jesus that part was easy. The Father did all the work in the healing. However, to say “Your sins are forgiven” was very hard. It would cost Jesus dearly.

I have to believe that this incident took place in some kind of public building or even a synagogue. The houses of that day were relatively small, and the idea of having a meeting of any size in one of them seems implausible. If you visit Capernaum today, they will show you the archeological remains of the largest building apart from the synagogue and tell you that must be Peter’s house. If it was, then Peter was by far the richest man in town. The building is ten times the size of the other houses, but even then has no large rooms. I suspect the meeting was in a town hall or synagogue.

Mark 2:13-14 “**Once again** (*sequence not indicated*) **Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.**

Luke 5:27-28 “**After this,** (*sequence indicated as after the healing of the leper*) **Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.”**

Matthew 9:9 “**As Jesus went on from there** (*sequence indicated as after the healing of the leper*), **he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.”**

³⁰ *This is the literal translation.*

This calling of Matthew to be a disciple clearly preceded the Sermon on the Plain in Mark before which Jesus named him as one of the Twelve. If, as we discussed earlier in this lesson, Thomas (the twin) and James son of Alphaeus were Matthew's brothers they were most probably also called about this time.

Matthew 9:10 **“While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house (sequence indicated), many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors ³¹ and ‘sinners’?’ On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy ³² who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’³³ For I have not**

³¹ **TAX COLLECTOR** (τελώνης {te-lō'-nās}) - The term is found only in the synoptic gospels (22 times). The word is incorrectly translated “publicans” in the KJV. The publicani (Latin) were wealthy men who paid for the privilege of collecting taxes in certain localities. They were often Romans, although it would appear that the Jew Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-10), who is called “chief tax collector” (ἀρχιτελώνης {är-khē-te-lō'-nās}), was a publicanus. These tax farmers employed local Jews to do the actual collecting of the taxes or tolls for them. It is the latter who are indicated by the term (τελώνης {te-lō'-nās}), Therefore, “tax collector” (RSV) is preferable to “publican” (KJV). The taxes levied by the Roman government were many and varied. There was first of all the poll tax (tributum capitis). This had to be paid by every male over fourteen and every female over twelve (the aged were exempt). There was the land tax (tributum agri), which was payable in kind. Both of these direct taxes were collected by Roman officials in Palestine. In addition, there were many forms of indirect taxation. Charges were made on all imports and exports, including the transportation of slaves. These were collected by the τελώνης {te-lō'-nās} of the gospels. They examined goods and collected tolls on roads and bridges. There was also a market toll in Jerusalem introduced by Herod. As a class, the tax collectors were hated by their fellow Jews. This was almost inevitable. They represented the foreign domination of Rome. Their methods were necessarily inquisitorial. That they often overcharged people and pocketed the surplus is almost certain. In the rabbinical writings they are classified with robbers. In the synoptic gospels they are bracketed with “sinners” This shows the common attitude of the Jewish people toward them. They were considered to be renegades, who sold their services to the foreign oppressor to make money at the expense of their own countrymen. Excerpted from: *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Article: Tax Collector*

³² Of course, the Pharisees considered themselves healthy. If they bothered to read Hosea 6 they would have found they were all under Adam's curse.

³³ The full context of Hosea 6 is as follows:

Hosea 6:3-7 “Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore, I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Like Adam, they have broken the covenant-- they were unfaithful to me there.”

come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

Mark 2:15-17 “**While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house (*sequence indicated*), many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”**

Luke 5:29-32 “**Then (*sequence indicated*) Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?’ Jesus answered them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”**

Of course the Pharisees were too blind to see that they were equally sinners with the tax collectors:

John 9:39-41 “Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.’ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, ‘What? Are we blind too?’ Jesus said, ‘If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.’”

Matthew 9:14-17 “**Then (*time only indicated as close after Matthew’s dinner*) John’s disciples ³⁴ came and asked him, ‘How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.’”**

Mark 2:18-22 “**Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting (*sequence not indicated*). Some people came and asked Jesus, ‘How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?’ Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the**

In other words, they didn’t understand who the LORD was. They thought God was pleased by outward ritual rather than by imitating His mercy and trusting who He was in their hearts.

³⁴ *John the Baptist, remember, was now in prison.*

new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.”

Luke 5:33-39 “They said to him, ‘John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.’ Jesus answered, ‘Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.’ He told them this parable: ‘No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.³⁵ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins.³⁶ If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

Jesus was often compared with a Bridegroom in both the Old Testament ³⁷ and New.

The point of fasting was to isolate yourself from the details of the world to concentrate on Spiritual things. Why would those who had the opportunity of being in the very presence of the Living Word Himself forsake that to concentrate on a good, but inferior, substitute?

While it is true that fasting by the Church is recorded, nowhere is it commanded or even recommended. Make of it what you will. Prayer, on the other hand, is commanded many times. So is meditating on God’s Word.

The point in both the illustrations of the wineskins and the new cloth patch on old cloth is that new phases of God’s revelation (new dispensations) required different methods of worship. In the Church Age, the Temple Worship would be completely done away with, along with its systems of Feasts and Sacrifices.

Further concerning fasts:

It should be remembered that there were six annual fasts in Jewish tradition, although there are none called for by the Mosaic Law. There were of course special fasts that were sometimes called for, as well as purely personal fasts. In the Old Testament the LORD called attention to the abuses of fasts:

³⁵ *Also, new cloth has not yet shrunk, while the old cloth has.*

³⁶ *Old wineskins are brittle and can’t expand. New wine produces gas which demands expansion.*

³⁷ *In Song of Songs Jesus is the Bridegroom. There He is called Solomon (Peace).*

Isaiah 58:2b-8 “They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day ³⁸ for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?³⁹ Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?⁴⁰ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,⁴¹ and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.”

In the New Testament, Jesus said this of fasting:

Matthew 6:16-18 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

³⁸ *The point is that humility has to be a way of life, not something you do one day a month or year.*

³⁹ *The point here is that true humility is not denoted by a physical posture, but a spiritual and mental posture.*

⁴⁰ *According to Josephus, in the first century, the High Priest of High Priests, Annas, stole the portion of the offerings that were supposed to be given to his kinsmen, the Aaronic priesthood, so that many of them starved to death.*

⁴¹ *Only when we abandon our arrogance (which is the root of all sin) can God reveal Himself to us.*