

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 23
The Ministry of Christ in Galilee and a Short Visit to Jerusalem for Pentecost
Spring 28 A.D.

In the last scene of the last lesson, Jesus had cast out the demons from the man from Gadara. The man had then sat at Jesus' feet listening hungrily to His teaching for at least one whole day if not more. When Jesus was leaving to return to the Jewish people on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the man wanted to go with Jesus. Jesus refused his request, but He gave the man instructions to go and give his testimony and preach the Gospel to his own people, the Gentiles of the Decapolis. Jesus had then gotten in the boat with His disciples and crossed back to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum.

We already studied what I have called “the Sermon on the Plain” so that we could study it in conjunction with “the Sermon on the Mount.” The Sermon on the Mount occurred prior to the crossing of the Sea of Galilee which we studied last time. We will not study the “Sermon on the Plain” again. It is clear that the “Sermon on the Plain” occurred shortly after the crossing back of the Sea of Galilee which is portrayed below. We know this because the calling of the Twelve occurred immediately before “the Sermon on the Plain.” Matthew (also known as Levi) was called as one of the Twelve at that time. On the day we are studying, Matthew was called as just an ordinary disciple. It stands to reason this was before he was called out as one of the Twelve.

The following were all evidently the events of one day. It was the day Jesus had left the man from Gadara out of whom He had cast the “Legion” of demons. It is probably the most completely detailed day recorded among the thirteen hundred plus days of Jesus' day to day ministry. Only the days of the week leading up to His crucifixion can match it for detail. It was probably fairly typical of all the days of His ministry. During that day, the events seem to have been as follows:

1. Early in the morning Jesus crossed the Lake from the southeast shore and arrived back in Capernaum. It was a distance of 7 to 9 miles.
2. He went to a hall where part of the crowd he had left two days before sat down to listen to His teaching. At that time He healed a paralytic. About the time for the mid-day meal He took a recess. He said they would gather again later in the day.
3. As He went walking along the Lake, He saw Matthew and called Him to full time service. Matthew invited Him to his home to have the mid-day meal with his associates. Matthew's brothers were among those associates. Thomas and James son of Alphaeus were Matthew's brothers.
4. Some disciples of John the Baptist asked some questions.
5. The synagogue ruler Jairus came asking Jesus to heal his daughter.
6. On the way to Jairus' house Jesus healed a woman with an issue of blood.
7. He went on to Jairus' house and raised his daughter from the dead.
8. He then healed two blind men.
9. He cast out a demon that made a man mute.

We will now look at those events in detail.

Jesus' Return across the Sea of Galilee

Matthew 9:1 **Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.¹**

Mark 5:21 **When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.**

Luke 8:40 **Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.**

When Jesus returned across the Sea of Galilee from the eastern shore he returned to Capernaum. It is called “His own town” in Matthew because He had made it His home base during His ministry in Galilee. When he was in town he probably lived with His relatives. They were His cousins James and John and their father Zebedee and their mother Salome, who was also Jesus’ aunt. They all lived in Capernaum.

Much of the large crowd that had been there before He had crossed the Lake two nights before during the storm had evidently waited for His return. It is likely that they had noticed how miraculously the storm had stopped on an instant that night. They might also have heard reports from some of the other disciples who had been out on the lake that night as to why the storm had stopped.

The Healing of the Paralytic

Matthew 9:2 **Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”**

The “their faith” here had to have included the faith of the paralytic. He was forgiven his sins. Faith was not always necessary for healing, but it was always necessary for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 9:3-4 **At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!” Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?”**

As we have noted before, this does not mean that Jesus had access to the omniscience of His deity while living His life on earth as a man. It only means that between the wisdom He had

¹ Here the Greek is *ἰδίαν πόλιν* {*idian polin*} which means “his own city” or “his own town.” On page 11, we have Matthew 13:54 and Mark 6:1. In those verses Nazareth is called *τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ* {*tan patrida autou*} which means “the birthplace of him.”

learned from communing with God the Father and studying the scriptures, and His observation of men and events around Him, He knew what they were thinking. Besides that, they reacted negatively in just this way about every time that He performed a miracle.

Matthew 9:5-7 **Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .”** **Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” And the man got up and went home.**

Jesus’ question was somewhat ironic. The irony was that the teachers of the Law would have thought that it would be extremely difficult to heal the paralytic. The reality was that it would be easy for Jesus. All He had to do was to ask the Father and the Father would heal the man. However, for Jesus to be able to say “Your sins are forgiven” would cost Jesus everything. He would have to die on the Cross for that man’s sins and the sins of the whole world. By that statement Jesus promised that He would complete what He had come to earth to do and therefore would have the authority to forgive sins.

Matthew 9:8 **When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.**

Although the teachers of the Law responded with hate, at least the crowd was filled with awe. However, the crowd still thought of Jesus as merely a man, not the man who was also the Son of God.

This account is only told in Matthew. This is somewhat similar to the account of the healing of a paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26. The difference is that there, the man’s friends had broken through a roof to get to Jesus. Just because in this account they brought their friend to Jesus on a mat does not make it the same occurrence. Jesus must have healed many paralytics during that time, and being paralyzed, they all would have had to be brought to him on a mat.

The Call of Matthew / Levi

We must remember that it was only after the miraculous catch of fish by Peter, Andrew, James, and John, just weeks before, that they had been formally called to full time discipleship by Jesus. However, they had followed Jesus for at least a year before that. We have no reason to suppose that Matthew was different. Furthermore, in Acts when Peter proposed the qualifications for the twelfth Apostleship vacated by Judas Iscariot, they were as follows:

Acts 1:21-22 “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the **men who have been with us the whole time** the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us.”

It therefore seems clear that Matthew had been with them during most of the time that they had started following Jesus shortly after His baptism by John the Baptist. Furthermore, it indicates there were others as well who had followed with them as “one of the men.” If this was true of Matthew, it was probably also true of his brothers Thomas and James.

The account in Matthew is told chronologically after the arrival back in Capernaum. It also includes an additional reference to the Old Testament, which is characteristic of Matthew. Matthew was written with a focus on Old Testament promises to the Jews. In Matthew’s own account, he referred to himself as “Matthew.” The accounts of Mark and Luke refer to him as “Levi.”

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, 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.

Mark 2:13-14 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake.² 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, 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.

The name “Matthew” is the English form of the Hellenized name Μαθθαῖος {māth-thī'-os}. It is thought to be a diminutive of the Hebrew מַתְתִּיָּא {mat-tith-yä'} which means “gift of the LORD.” Levi is the English form of the Hellenized name Λευῖς {le-wē's}.³ This probably means that Matthew was a Levite. The Levites were the ones who were expected to teach the truth of the word to the Israelites. It was one of God’s ironies that He chose Matthew, the despised tax collector, to be the one who wrote the Gospel that was specifically aimed at the Jews.

Matthew 9:10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples.

Mark 2:15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

Luke 5:29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.

² Capernaum was besides the Lake (the Sea of Galilee).

³ The original Hebrew name of Jacob’s son לֵוִי {la-ve'} means “joined to.”

This was evidently the mid-day meal. We already studied this episode and the criticism aimed at Jesus for consorting with tax collectors in another context in Lesson 19. At that time, we gave a fuller explanation of what a “tax collector” was in those days.

The accounts in Mark and Luke are told as episodes of the period. While in his own Gospel Matthew refers to himself as Matthew, in Mark and Luke he was called Levi. This may be because “Levi” was probably a more respectful name since Levi was the tribe of the teachers. All three accounts in the Gospels are nearly identical.

At that time John’s disciples also asked why Jesus did not fast. This episode (Matthew 9:14-17) was also examined in Lesson 19 so we will not examine it again.

The Miracles

All four of these miracles are placed in time as immediately following the crossing of the Sea of Galilee after the casting out of the demons.

The Woman Healed from Bleeding on the Way to Jairus’ House

Matthew 9:18-19 While he was saying this,⁴ a ruler came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has ~~just died~~ *by now died*.⁵ But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

Mark 5:21-24 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus,⁶ came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

Luke 8:40-42 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.

⁴ Explaining why His disciples did not fast.

⁵ The Greek word translated “has just” is the word ἄρτι {ä'r-tē} which connotes a suspension of time. Darby’s probably gives the best translation. “My daughter has by this (now) died.” Evidently, she was on the point of death when the father left the house.

⁶ The name Jairus is a Grecianized form Ἰαῖρος {e-ä'-e-ros} of a Hebrew name יְאִירִי {yä-ere'} which means “Whom Jehovah Enlightens.”

Jairus was the father's name. His name meant "Who Jehovah Enlightens." He was a ruler in the synagogue of Capernaum.⁷ His daughter was twelve. The crowds around Jesus were so thick the man could hardly move. Everyone wanted to get close to Jesus in the hopes that He would perform a miracle. We should keep this in mind when we try to envision Jesus' movements. By necessity, when the crowds were present, they moved at a snail's pace.

Mark 5:25-26 **And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.**

Luke 8:43 **And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.**

Matthew 9:20a **Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years**

Only Mark gave the full extent of the woman's situation. I think the following commentary is useful here:

"According to the Jewish ideas of that time the woman was an utter outcast on account of her disease—she was not allowed to take part in any religious proceedings, could not come into the temple, could not touch other persons and had to be separated from her husband. Her disease came within the scope of the regulations of Leviticus 15 (*concerning blood*). So she was not only impoverished through having had to give all her possessions to physicians in the hope that they might heal her—she was a despised and solitary woman. If her cure had taken place without the Savior making it known publicly, she would have had the utmost difficulty in removing from the inhabitants of the town the prejudice and scorn that she had met with for years. For this reason, the Savior, who knew her in all her need and sorrows, and understood her circumstances 'makes her appear before the whole multitude to testify publicly that she has been healed.'" Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 261.

Mark 5:27-28 **She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." NRSV**

Luke 8:44a **She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak,**

Matthew 9:20b-21 (*she*) **came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."**

⁷ *The ruler of the synagogue was the man chosen to care for the physical arrangements of the synagogue services. The president of the synagogue would be the equivalent designation today. Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.*

The words translated “the edge of his cloak” are better translated, “the hem of His cloak.” These are exactly the same words translated “the train of His robe” in Isaiah 6:1 “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the ~~train~~⁸ hem of his robe cloak filled the temple.” To me, that was another way of saying that the person of Jesus Christ (enclosed by His cloak) filled the true Temple that God had promised would be built by the Son of David who would reign forever.

Mark 5:29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Luke 8:44b and immediately her bleeding stopped.

Her healing was immediate, but not apparent to anyone but the woman.

Mark 5:30-33 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

Luke 8:45-47 “Who touched me?” Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.” Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

Matthew’s account has nothing of what had happened in this interim between the time the woman touched Jesus and the time He pronounced her healed. This promotes the question; Why did Jesus turn around and confront this woman? One of the possible reasons was addressed in the commentary by Geldenhuys just above. Also, I think that Jesus wanted to make sure that she did not think there was some miraculous power in his cloak. Instead He made sure that she knew that the power came from her faith in Him. The practice of later ages of venerating souvenirs and trinkets supposedly associated with Christ or the Apostles ignored this lesson.

Mark 5:34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Luke 8:48 Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

⁸ *As far as I can find, the style of having a long train on a king’s robe was a fashion that did not appear for more than two thousand years after Uzziah died. I think the image intended by the vision in Isaiah is intended to convey the humanity of Christ rather than a sense of His expensive clothes.*

Matthew 9:22 **Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.**

Jesus assured her it was her faith that healed her. Jesus performed many spectacular miracles that were apparent to all. This was a miracle that would only have been apparent to the woman herself. Even Jesus’ disciples probably wondered what Jesus was talking to the woman about. I think that this woman must have become one of Jesus’ female disciples and probably joined the band of women who helped provide His needs. It was probably only then, when she personally told them, that they fully realized what had happened.

Mark’s account is by far the longest, while Matthew’s account is very short. Note that the woman had suffered for twelve years and the girl that was to be healed was twelve years old. Twelve was the number related to Israel (twelve original tribes), so perhaps the “coincidence” of the same number of years was meant to remind Israel that they all needed to be healed.

The Girl who was Raised from the Dead

Mark 5:35-39 **While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?” Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”**

Luke 8:49-52 **While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher any more.” Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.”**

Matthew 9:23-24a **When Jesus entered the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.”**

The weeping and wailing and the music signified that they were already having a wake. It would not have started until after they had concluded that she was dead.

Mark 5:40 **But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him (*Peter, James, and John*), and went in where the child was.**

Luke 8:53 **They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.**

Matthew 9:24b-25a **But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in**

Evidently, many in the crowd had seen the body and clear evidence that the little girl was dead and had not been breathing for some time. In spite of all the miracles Jesus had performed in Capernaum, their faith was so small they laughed at Him. Woe to you Capernaum! (Luke 10:15, Matthew 11:23)

Mark 5:41-43 **He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.**

Luke 8:54-56 **But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.**

Matthew 9:25b-26 **and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region.**

I think the following commentary by Lane is useful.

“Special motivation for the injunction to silence may be found in the rank unbelief of those who had ridiculed Jesus with their scornful laughter. It is clear throughout Mark that Jesus revealed his Messiahship only with reserve. It is appropriate to this consistent pattern of behavior that he was unwilling to make himself known to the raucous, unbelieving group that had gathered at Jairus’ house. He did not permit them to witness the saving action by which the girl was restored to her parents, and he directed that the miracle should continue to remain unknown to those outside. He recognized that the responsibility of the parents in this regard could not continue indefinitely. When the child appeared in public the facts would speak for themselves. The parents could, however, withhold what had happened and thus fulfill the intention of Jesus. Before it was known that the girl was yet alive, the purpose for which the charge had been given would have been fulfilled; Jesus would have departed and could no longer be subject to ostentatious acclaim.” The Gospel According To Mark, William L. Lane, pp. 198-199.

The Healing of the Two Blind Men

⁹ *This is a clear indication that Jesus spoke Aramaic (Hebrew) during His ministry. Mark, who was a Jew writing to Greek speaking Gentiles gives us the Aramaic and a Greek translation. Luke who was a Gentile writing to Gentiles just gives us the Greek. The original Aramaic expression might be more accurately translated “Arise little lamb.”*

Matthew 9:27-28a **As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him,**

The phrase translated “gone indoors” is the Greek phrase εἰς οἰκίαν {ice oy-kee'-ahn} should be literally translated as “gone into the building.” It seems likely this was the same building or hall in Capernaum where He had healed the paralytic earlier in the day. We know from verses 33 and 34 that there were Pharisees in the crowd that was present in the building.

Matthew 9:28b-30 **and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you”; and their sight was restored.**

The implied lesson of this miracle was that it took faith to be able to see God’s truth.

Matthew 9:30b-31 **Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.**

Jesus had not come to heal, but to teach. Although His healing ministry had been prophesied, it was merely the sign that God’s authority was behind His teaching. Jesus was concerned that His ministry would become all about healing and not about His message. The physical healing could temporarily ease the disease of the body, but His teaching could permanently defeat death and save the soul.

The Driving out of a Demon

Matthew 9:32-34 **While they (*the healed blind men*) were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”**

As usual, when Jesus cast out demons, the Pharisees accused Him of casting them out with the aid of Satan. Jesus would later describe their true inner motivation: John 8:44 “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire.”

This also raises a question: Why does a demon, having entered a person with that person’s consent or cooperation,¹⁰ then inflict a crippling disability on the body they have inhabited? Perhaps it is because the human soul, also inhabiting the same body, starts to resist and seek deliverance. That is just a personal point of view although I have heard of something like that in

¹⁰ *As the LORD Himself will not tamper with human free will, it is obvious that He will not allow Satan, fallen angels, or demons to do it.*

testimonies from people who have been delivered from demon possession. Perhaps it is just because Satan and his demons hate all humanity.

This verse marked the end of the description of that special day.

Matthew 9:35 **Jesus went through all the towns and villages (of Galilee), teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.**

As we saw before, Jesus' ministry in Galilee centered along the Sea of Galilee. However, this tells us that He also at least went through every town and village in Galilee. Most experts think there were at least several hundred villages in Galilee.

Matthew 9:36 **When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.¹¹**

Jesus knew that most of them had not been faithfully taught the Word of God. Isaiah had prophesied this about the supposed "shepherds of Israel":

Isaiah 56:10-11 "Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark;¹² they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way; each seeks his own gain."

Matthew 9:37-38 **Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."**

Jesus saw the crowds and knew that He could never reach all of them in person. He still needs all of us to be workers in the world which is His harvest field.

Jesus' Second Visit to Nazareth since the Beginning of His ministry

You may remember that during Jesus' first visit to Nazareth, about fifteen months before, the people from the synagogue had tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:16-30). Since then He had taught in Judea and Jerusalem for about 10 months, and then had been back in Galilee for about half a year. Although they still did not accept Him, He was now their most renowned hometown

¹¹ *Moses's assistant Joshua was a type of Christ. Moses had said on the occasion of Joshua's commissioning: Numbers 27:15b-17 "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."*

¹² *For those of us who love dogs, this is proof that as far back as Isaiah's time, dogs were used as watchdogs.*

citizen, so they did not try to kill Him. The story is told in both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. You might notice that the story, as told in Matthew, could easily look like this visit was in the second part of Jesus' long ministry in Galilee.¹³ However, in Mark it seems to be in the first part. However, the account in Matthew does not specify the time that it happened, only that it happened. Mark's account makes it clear that it happened just after Jesus' eventful day in Capernaum after He had recrossed the Sea of Galilee.

Mark 6:1-2a Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue,

Jesus was also surrounded by many more of His disciples which may have numbered almost a hundred. The first time He had visited Nazareth there were probably not many more than six.

Matthew 13:54a Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue,

As we noticed, in the Gospel of Matthew this is grouped with events which occurred in the second part of Jesus' long Galilean Ministry. However, you will note that this is not described as occurring before or after any event, only that "coming to his hometown" these things happened. Chronologically, I believe that it should be placed just after the events in Capernaum. Of course it is possible to argue that these two passages describe two visits which had identical reactions from the people.

Mark 6:2b and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!"

Matthew 13:54b and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.

When Jesus entered Nazareth the crowd wasn't as hostile as when He had left the last time He was there. At that time, many in the crowd wanted to kill Him and the rest of them just stood by. This time He had a bigger name and a bigger crowd of disciples with Him. They allowed Him to preach in the Synagogue and they didn't attack Him. However, their hearts were hardened against the truth.

Mark 6:3a Isn't this the carpenter?

Matthew 13:55a "Isn't this the carpenter's son?"

This verse tells us that Jesus had followed the same trade as his father (Matthew 13:55) before His ministry began. They had both been carpenters. Actually, the Greek word here is τέκτων

¹³ The two parts of Jesus's ministry in Galilee are separated by His visit to Jerusalem for Pentecost (John 5).

{te'k-tōn} which is the word from which we derive the English word – “technician.” It applied to those who worked with wood, metal, and stone in construction. In other words, Jesus could be more accurately described as a builder. I always used to ask myself why the LORD sent Him as a builder and not a shepherd. After all, Jesus was called “the good shepherd.” I discovered that the Hebrew equivalent of τέκτων {te'k-tōn} is שָׂרָף {khä-räsh'}. It is the word which was used in the Old Testament to describe those who built the two Temples. There it is often translated “craftsman” or “carpenter.” That was when I made the connection. God had promised David a descendant who would **build** His Temple (2 Samuel 7:12). The perfect life and sacrificial death of that descendant was what made up the true Temple (John 2:19). In God’s perfect sense of humor, He sent a “carpenter” to build His true Temple.

Mark 6:3b Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James,¹⁴ Joseph,¹⁵ Judas ¹⁶ and Simon?¹⁷ Aren’t his sisters here with us?”

Matthew 13:55b-56 Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

These are the only two verses that tell us that Jesus had at least two sisters because they are described in the plural. The phrase “all his sisters” seems to indicate there were more than two. His four brothers are also mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

Mark 6:3c-4 And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”

Matthew 13:57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”

The phrase “in his own house” referred to the fact that at least some of Jesus’ own brothers did not then believe in Him: John 7:5 “For even his own brothers did not believe in him.” We know that later they did.

Mark 6:5-6a He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

¹⁴ James became one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church with Peter and John. He was martyred by the Jews in 63 A.D.

¹⁵ Joseph was possibly the Joseph Barsabbas (son of peace) who was picked by the Apostles as one of the two nominees to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve. Acts 1:20-26

¹⁶ Judas (Jude) was possibly the Judas Barsabbas (son of peace) who was picked by the Jerusalem church in Acts 15:22-29 to accompany Paul and Silas back to Antioch as their representative. Later Jude became the author of the epistle of Jude.

¹⁷ Simon was supposed to have become the Bishop of Jerusalem who was martyred in 107 A.D. (Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, Chapter 2)

Matthew 13:58 **And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.**

This helps establish the principle that miracles do not create faith. If they did, the Exodus generation would have been the greatest generation of all times. Miracles only strengthen faith that already exists because of the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the Word. This verse also tells us that not many in Nazareth had become believers in Christ.

As Jesus would later tell Thomas who wouldn't believe in the resurrection until he had seen the risen Jesus:¹⁸

John 20:29b "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Visit to Jerusalem for Pentecost May 28, 28 A.D.

The next event is from the Gospel of John. The visit recorded there isn't recorded in the other three Gospels.

John says in verse 1: "Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews." So, which feast was this? That will give us our time frame. During the First Century A.D. there were five feasts which the Jews celebrated. The three major ones set up by the LORD in Moses' time were the Feast of Unleavened Bread just following Passover in early Spring, the Feast of Pentecost called Shavuot which fell about early June, and the Feast of Tabernacles called Sukkot which fell about October. The two minor feasts were Purim in about early March which was established in the 5th century BC in the Book of Esther, and the Feast of Dedication called Hanukkah which fell in December which was established in the 2nd century BC to mark the rededication of the Temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The eminent Bible commentator Alfred Edersheim believed the feast indicated was the Feast of Purim (March). However, that would have been too close to Jesus' visit to Samaria and His return to Galilee from His long ministry in Judea. That had occurred in February four months before the first harvest.¹⁹ The Feast of Purim that year occurred on February 28. If the feast in question was the Feast of Purim, that would have only allowed less than a month to cram in the all the events we have covered in the previous four lessons including the Sermon on the Mount, the calling of the twelve, the storm on the Lake and the cleansing of the demon possessed man of Gadara, and the second visit to Bethlehem. If this was the feast of Purim, then if we consider travelling time, all those events would have had to be accomplished in just a few weeks. I don't believe that is plausible.

¹⁸ *It should be remembered that the other ten also didn't believe the women's account of Jesus resurrection until they saw Him.*

¹⁹ *John 4:35a "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?'"*

Another popular suggestion is that this was Passover. However, during every Passover identified in the Bible that had Jesus in Jerusalem,²⁰ Jesus went into the Temple at Passover and confronted the money changers who were charging a temple tax which was by tradition only charged at Passover. It was completely unscriptural and suggested that God's salvation could be purchased by money. Partly because there is no such confrontation recorded here I do not believe this was the Feast of the Passover. Also, since Passover that year (29 AD) was on April 14, this would still leave only about seven 7 weeks from February for the events described in the previous paragraph. We also know this wasn't the Passover of 29 A.D. because we know Jesus was in Galilee for that Passover (John 6:4).

That leaves the other three feasts of 28 A.D. as possibilities (Pentecost – May 28, Tabernacles – September 21, and Dedication – November 28).

It seems unlikely that it was Tabernacles, because that was one of the two annual feasts (along with Passover) with massive pilgrimage and significance to the promise to Israel. Only one visit to Jerusalem during Tabernacles by Jesus is specified in Scripture, and that was the last one (John 7:2) before His death.

That leaves either Pentecost (May 28, 28 A.D.) or the Feast of Dedication (November 28, 28 A.D.). Either one could work.

However, I lean toward it being Pentecost, because that would make the time about 4 months since the return from Judea and would still leave plenty of time between that and the next definite time marker in the scriptures (Passover 29 A.D.) for the events recorded in that interval.

John 5:1 Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews.

As I have argued above, I believe this was probably the Feast of Pentecost May 28, 28 A.D.

John 5:2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda (House of Mercy) and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.

This was a gate in the northeastern wall just north of the Temple Mount and opposite the Mount of Olives (see the map on the next page). It was this gate which they used to bring in the animals for sacrifice in the Temple (hence it was called the Sheep Gate). Appropriately, it was through this gate that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was later to be brought in from the Garden of Gethsemane to be tried, condemned, and sacrificed for us all.

John 5:3-4 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water,-for an angel of the Lord went down at

²⁰ John 2:13-19 in 27 A.D./, Matthew 2:12 and Mark 1:15 in 30 A.D.

certain seasons ²¹ into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.



²¹ It seems likely that the “certain seasons” occurred during some of the Feasts.

The pool was evidently surrounded by columns which supported a roof for protection from the sun and rain. It was there that the disabled waited for their chance.

The underlined text above is not in the flawed Codex Sinaiticus and this is omitted from the translations of the NIV, and the NRSV. The ASV and NAS both have the underlined passage, but in italics. It is just one of many errors in the Codex Sinaiticus which are undoubtedly the reason it was originally thrown into the cellar of St. Helen's Monastery where it was found well preserved next to the furnace. Perhaps this passage was more easily discarded by the NIV and NRSV because some people in the Church are uncomfortable with miracles of this type.

John 5:5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

It doesn't say he had been waiting at the pool for 38 years, only that he had been an invalid for that long. However, he must have waited there many times over the years.

John 5:6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

We know from the later narrative that the man had no idea who Jesus was. The narrative also seems to indicate that Jesus had escaped the surveillance of the Scribes and Pharisees. Perhaps this was early morning and Jesus was out for a quiet, perhaps even solitary, walk and decided to visit the Pool of Bethesda which was very near to the Mt. of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane where He usually stayed on the feast days.

John 5:7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

This reference to the water being stirred is another argument for the inclusion of John 5:3-4 as it stands in the Textus Receptus. John was writing in Ephesus to the Church over 20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. He could hardly have expected his readers to understand the tradition of the stirring of the waters of the Pool of Bethesda without some previous explanation in the text. Furthermore, I have no reason to believe that the LORD would have been constrained at the manifestation of miraculous healing in connection with His Holy City and Temple. Just because "miracles" have been abused by the unscrupulous throughout history is no reason to deny that God has always performed miracles, and in abundance.

John 5:8-9a Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Evidently, after this short conversation Jesus told the man to get up and walk. We aren't given the details, but the man must have felt the stirring of life in his feeble limbs. He evidently

realized he was no longer disabled. You will notice that there is no record of this man expressing any preexisting faith. Neither did Jesus tell him that his sins were forgiven.

John 5:9b-10 **The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”**

Evidently, as the man was walking home, some of the Jews rebuked him. Incidentally this kind of extreme definition of what was “work” was an interpretation which is not found in the Law of Moses, but was invented by legalistic Pharisees. Today in Israel, according to the view of the Orthodox Jews, it is violation of the Law to even push an elevator button or flip a light switch.

John 5:11-12 **But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”**

Clearly, the man didn’t know that it was Jesus who had healed him.

John 5:13 **The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.**

Evidently, after Jesus had healed the man, He just turned and walked quietly away. No one but the healed man even knew of the miracle.

John 5:14 **Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”**

Remember, the only unforgivable sin is the sin of rejecting God’s gift of forgiveness. Here is one of the cases where Jesus healed someone who had neither faith nor gratitude and the end for him seems to have been worse than the beginning.

John 5:15-16 **The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.**

Just to show the man’s lack of repentance, the scripture records that he went away in his newly healed body and reported Jesus’ “crime” to the authorities.

John 5:17 **Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”**

“This very day” was the Sabbath. God was working so that they could rest in Him. Jesus’ body was the true Temple of God. The stone Temple in Jerusalem was only a shadow or figure of the true Temple. In the stone Temple, the priests worked on every Sabbath and Holy Day. So Jesus, like His Father and like the priests in the Temple worked on the Sabbath and the Holy Days.

John 5:18 For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

So, for well more than a year before they finally succeeded in having Jesus crucified, the Jews were trying desperately to find an excuse and means to kill Him.