

## **The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 16**

**Date: About Early March, 28 AD**

In the last lesson we saw Jesus travel through Samaria on the way back to Galilee. While He was there, He spoke to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well outside Sychar. He ended up persuading her and many of the people of her nearby village to trust in Him. Then after two days, he returned to Galilee. It is possible that His early departure was spurred by the news of the arrest of John the Baptist. This arrest was described in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke:

Mark 1:14-15 "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God."<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 4:12-13a "When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned (withdrew) to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum."

The phrase "leaving Nazareth" implies that Jesus went back through Nazareth after his visit to Samaria and moved on to Capernaum. In the last lesson, we also saw Luke's more complete description of John the Baptist's arrest:

Luke 3:19-20 "But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison."

Later in our study we will also study Matthew's more complete description of John's arrest in conjunction with his account of the execution and death of John the Baptist:

Matthew 14:3-4 "Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'"

### **Who was Herod Antipas?**

At this point I think it would be useful to introduce the character of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was the name by which he was called in Josephus' histories. However, in Scripture he was known variously as Herod the tetrarch,<sup>2</sup> King Herod, or just Herod. He must be differentiated from his father who is known to history as Herod the Great. Since, in Matthew and Luke, Herod the Great was also known as "King Herod," it can get confusing. Herod

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<sup>1</sup> *This implies that Jesus and His disciples had been ministering somewhere else, Judea.*

<sup>2</sup> *A tetrarch was a ruler of a fourth part of a Roman province. Herod Antipas was one of four rulers (tetra means four) of the previous single province of the monarch, Herod the Great. See Luke 3:1*

Antipas must also be differentiated from his nephew Herod Agrippa, who is also known in Acts as King Herod. Herod Antipas played an important part in the history of Israel during the ministry of Jesus. At the end of the last lesson, we saw that Herod Agrippa was the one who imprisoned John the Baptist about the time that Jesus returned to Galilee.

His given name was Antipas. When he was granted the dignity of rulership, he was allowed to take the dynastic name of Herod. Thus, he is known as Herod Antipas, just as Augustus (Octavian), the successor in the Roman dynasty of Caesar, was known as Caesar Augustus.

Herod Antipas was one of Herod the Great's eight sons, which he had by nine different wives. At the time of the death of Herod the Great, Antipas was about 16 and had probably just recently left Rome, where he was raised and educated (Josephus, Antiquities Book 17, Chapter 1, Paragraph 3). He was the younger brother of Archelaus and shared the same mother who was a Samaritan. He was the youngest of Herod's surviving sons (Josephus, Antiquities Book 17, Chapter 6, Paragraph 1). Herod the Great had executed the three eldest sons fearing they had conspired against him at different times. On the death of his father Herod the Great, Antipas challenged his older brother Archelaus for the inheritance of Herod's total kingdom. In this he had the support of the rest of Herod's family who felt Archelaus was unqualified to be King of any part Herod's former kingdom. However, the Romans upheld Herod the Great's last testament and split the Kingdom between Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip (a half-brother). Archelaus received Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Philip received Batanea, and Trachonitis, two relatively small but fertile and prosperous territories north of the Sea of Galilee). Antipas received Galilee and Perea.

As it turned out, Antipas' brother Archelaus was incompetent and insubordinate to Roman oversight in his administration of Judea. As a result, Archelaus was kicked out by the Romans after nine years and exiled to Vienna. Archelaus' territories were then put under a succession of Roman Governors. Roman historians record very little about the reign of Herod Antipas. However, we do know that, like his father Herod the Great, he was a great builder. He rebuilt Sepphoris after its destruction in 4 BC. He built a new capital city of Galilee and named it Tiberius after the Roman Emperor who had succeeded Augustus. Galilee was relatively prosperous and peaceful during the reign of Herod Antipas. The fact that he reigned for more than 40 years (4 BC to 39 AD) in an atmosphere of relentless political intrigue testifies to his political savvy and acumen. Whatever his faults as a person, as a ruler he was neither weak nor inactive. In his later years, on a visit to Rome, he evidently stayed with one of his half-brothers (also named Philip though this one was not the Tetrarch). This half-brother was married to a young woman named Herodias who was the daughter of one of the previously executed sons of Herod the Great. She was thus the niece of both her husband Philip and Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas became infatuated with her and persuaded her to leave her husband. Herod Antipas then divorced his wife of many years, the daughter of Aretas, the king of the Nabateans. They were the people who had driven the Edomites out of their country to the southeast of the Dead Sea and built Petra.<sup>3</sup> Eventually this divorce was to lead to a war with his father-in-law and his

undoing.

## Historical Fate of Herod Antipas

Aretas, Herod's father-in-law by his first marriage, made war on Herod Antipas. Antipas lost the war. This caused him to fall into political disfavor with Tiberius' successor Caius (popularly known to history as Caligula). Caligula took the occasion to appoint his friend Herod Agrippa to the rulership of both Judea and Herod Antipas' territories (Galilee and Perea). Agrippa was also given all of Herod's wealth. Herodias was Herod Agrippa's older sister. Below I have included some of Josephus' relevant accounts.<sup>4</sup>

Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 18, Chapter 5, Paragraphs 1-2.

“One article of this marriage (*of Herod Antipas to Herodias*) also was this, that he (*Herod Antipas*) should divorce Aretas' daughter (*in a time when polygamy was common among the Jewish aristocracy but not among the Roman aristocracy*). So Antipas, when he had made this agreement, sailed to Rome; but when he had done there the business he went about, and was returned again, his wife having discovered the agreement he had made with Herodias, and having learned it before he had notice of her knowledge of the whole design, she desired him to send her to Macherus, which is a place in the borders of the dominions of Aretas and Herod, without informing him of any of her intentions. Accordingly Herod sent her thither, as thinking his wife had not perceived anything; now she had sent a good while before to Macherus, which was subject to her father and so all things necessary for her journey were made ready for her by the general of Aretas' army; and by that means she soon came into Arabia, under the conduct of the several generals, who carried her from one to another successively; and she soon came to her father, and told him of Herod's intentions. So Aretas made this the first occasion of his enmity between him and Herod, who had also some quarrel with him about their limits at the country of Gamalitis. So they raised armies on both sides, and prepared for war, and sent their generals to fight instead of themselves; and when they had joined battle, all Herod's army was destroyed by the treachery of some fugitives, who, though they were of the tetrarchy of Philip, joined with Aretas' army. So Herod wrote about these affairs to Tiberius, who being very angry at the attempt made by Aretas, wrote to Vitellius to make war upon him, and either to take him alive, and bring him to him in bonds, or to kill him, and send him his head. This was the charge that Tiberius gave to the president of Syria.”

*My Comment: It was during the preparation for this campaign that Tiberius died and was replaced as Roman Emperor by Caligula (also known as Caius). He had a very different view of Herod Antipas which was influenced by his friend Archelaus who hated his brother-in-law.*

“Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod

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<sup>3</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities Book 18, Chapter 1, Paragraph 1.*

<sup>4</sup> Josephus lived from about 37 to 100 AD.

slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly, he was sent (*as*) a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.”

Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 18, Chapter 7, Paragraphs 1-2.

“But Herodias, Agrippa's sister, who now lived as wife to that Herod who was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, took this authority of her brother (*he had been appointed King over Judea by his best friend Caligula*) in an envious manner, particularly when she saw that he had a greater dignity bestowed on him than her husband had (*Antipas was only a tetrarch, not a king*); since, when he ran away, it was because he was not able to pay his debts; and now he was come back, he was in a way of dignity, and of great good fortune. She was therefore grieved and much displeased at so great a mutation of his affairs; and chiefly when she saw him marching among the multitude with the usual ensigns of royal authority, she was not able to conceal how miserable she was, by reason of the envy she had towards him; but she excited her husband, and desired him that he would sail to Rome, to court honors equal to his; for she said that she could not bear to live any longer, while Agrippa, the son of that Aristobulus who was condemned to die by his father, one that came to her husband in such extreme poverty, that the necessaries of life were forced to be entirely supplied him day by day; and when he fled away from his creditors by sea, he now returned a king; while he was himself the son of a king, and while the near relation he bare to royal authority called upon him to gain the like dignity, he sat still, and was contented with a privater life. “But then, Herod, although thou wast formerly not concerned to be in a lower condition than thy father from whom thou wast derived had been, yet do thou now seek after the dignity which thy kinsman hath attained to; and do not thou bear this contempt, that a man who admired thy riches should be in greater honor than thyself, nor suffer his poverty to show itself able to purchase greater things than our abundance; nor do thou esteem it other than a shameful thing to be inferior to one who, the other day, lived upon thy charity. But let us go to Rome, and let us spare no pains nor expenses, either of silver or gold, since they cannot be kept for any better use than for the obtaining of a kingdom.”

“But for Herod, he opposed her request at this time, out of the love of ease, and having a suspicion of the trouble he should have at Rome; so he tried to instruct her better. But the more she saw him draw back, the more she pressed him to it, and desired him to leave no stone unturned in order to be king; and at last she left not off till she engaged him, whether he would

or not, to be of her sentiments, because he could not otherwise avoid her importunity. So he got all things ready, after as sumptuous a manner as he was able, and spared for nothing, and went up to Rome, and took Herodias along with him. But Agrippa, when he was made sensible of their intentions and preparations, he also prepared to go thither; and as soon as he heard they set sail, he sent Fortunatus, one of his freed-men, to Rome, to carry presents to the emperor, and letters against Herod, and to give Caius a particular account of those matters, if he should have any opportunity. This man followed Herod so quick, and had so prosperous a voyage, and came so little after Herod, that while Herod was with Caius, he came himself, and delivered his letters; for they both sailed to Dicearchia, and found Caius at Bairn, which is itself a little city of Campania, at the distance of about five furlongs from Dicearchia. There are in that place royal palaces, with sumptuous apartments, every emperor still endeavoring to outdo his predecessor's magnificence; the place also affords warm baths, that spring out of the ground of their own accord, which are of advantage for the recovery of the health of those that make use of them; and, besides, they minister to men's luxury also. Now Caius saluted Herod, for he first met with him, and then looked upon the letters which Agrippa had sent him, and which were written in order to accuse Herod; wherein he accused him, that he had been in confederacy with Sejanus against Tiberius' and that he was now confederate with Artabanus, the king of Parthia, in opposition to the government of Caius; as a demonstration of which he alleged, that he had armor sufficient for seventy thousand men ready in his armory. Caius was moved at this information, and asked Herod whether what was said about the armor was true; and when he confessed there was such armor there, for he could not deny the same, the truth of it being too notorious, Caius took that to be a sufficient proof of the accusation, that he intended to revolt. So he took away from him his tetrarchy, and gave it by way of addition to Agrippa's kingdom; he also gave Herod's money to Agrippa, and, by way of punishment, awarded him a perpetual banishment, and appointed Lyons, a city of Gaul, to be his place of habitation. But when he was informed that Herodias was Agrippa's sister, he made her a present of what money was her own, and told her that it was her brother who prevented her being put under the same calamity with her husband. But she made this reply: "Thou, indeed, O emperor! actest after a magnificent manner, and as becomes thyself in what thou offerest me; but the kindness which I have for my husband hinders me from partaking of the favor of thy gift; for it is not just that I, who have been made a partner in his prosperity, should forsake him in his misfortunes." Hereupon Caius was angry at her, and sent her with Herod into banishment, and gave her estate to Agrippa. And thus did God punish Herodias for her envy at her brother, and Herod also for giving ear to the vain discourses of a woman."

At this point we can resume the story of the life of Christ as He returned to Galilee, evidently coming through Nazareth. It was His second Galilean ministry since His baptism.

**John 4:45** **When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.**

Many of the people of Galilee had last seen Jesus during their previous pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) ten months before. Evidently, during

Jesus' time in Judea, he had not gone to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. That was the other great Feast which had occurred during the time that Jesus was in Judea. You will notice that the Gospel of John speaks of "all that He had done in Jerusalem" at that time. Yet, John's Gospel only mentions Jesus' turning over the money changers' tables in the Temple and His private conversation with Nicodemus.<sup>5</sup> This just underlines the fact that Jesus was always performing miracles and doing notable things. In an earlier lesson we saw the people of Nazareth mention the miracles Jesus had performed in Capernaum on His first visit there (Luke 4:23), yet there is no scriptural record given of those miracles either. I expect that most of the miracles that were recorded in scripture were meant to be typical of the thousands of other unrecorded miracles Jesus performed during the 3½ years (1278 days) of His ministry.

**John 4:46a** **Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.**

It is almost certain that Jesus would have gone through Nazareth on this trip as it is on the road from Samaria to Cana. This visit is not recorded in scripture except by inference in Matthew 4:13.

**John 4:46b** **And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum.**

Since this was the territory of Herod Antipas, the term "royal official" means, an official of Herod Antipas. There is a good chance that this royal official was Cuza, the steward of Herod's household. We know that Cuza's wife Joanna became one of Jesus' faithful supporters (Luke 8:3) and was one of the second group of women who visited Jesus' tomb after Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Salome (Mary's sister) that Sunday morning when He showed Himself resurrected to all the women (Luke 24:10). The event described here was probably the foundation of Joanna's devotion.

**John 4:47** **When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.**

Remember, besides the miracles the Galileans had seen Jesus perform at Jerusalem ten months earlier, Jesus had also performed many miracles in Capernaum just before that.

**John 4:48** **"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."**

Although this was addressed to "him" (the official), it was meant for the Greek plural "you" (the Jews in general). I suspect that Jesus was contrasting in His mind the recent reception of the Samaritans of Sychar with the Jews of Galilee. The Samaritans had believed after just

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<sup>5</sup> *Nicodemus also mentioned the unrecorded miracles that Jesus had done: John 3:2 "He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.'"*

hearing His word. The Jews required the performance of miracles. Events proved that Jesus' analysis of the Jews was accurate. Despite witnessing thousands of miracles, most of the Jews turned their back on Jesus. In contrast, many of the Samaritans and Gentiles flocked to the Gospel without ever seeing a miracle.

**John 4:49-50** **The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed.**

The man didn't argue with Jesus but went home believing Jesus' promise was enough.

**John 4:51-52** **While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."**

The man seems to have trusted that Jesus' promise was good as soon as it was given. He hadn't hurried back to Capernaum to see if Jesus' promise had been kept. It was about 20 miles by road from Capernaum to Cana, and I expect he was mounted. He didn't meet his servants coming to meet him until the next day. He had talked to Jesus at 1 PM (the seventh hour after sunrise).

**John 4:53** **Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.**

Although Jesus wasn't present at the healing, the time of healing proved He was the source of it.

**John 4:54** **This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.**

This was not the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, but the second time he performed a miracle to announce his arrival in Galilee. The first was the turning of water into wine. We know that he had performed many miraculous signs in Capernaum before he went to Judea (Luke 4:23), and many miraculous signs in Judea (John 3:2). Notice that both miracles were performed in Cana.

### **The Calling of Peter, Andrew, John, and James to be Apostles**

Having come through Cana, Jesus went down to the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. Next is the record of an episode that took place shortly after they arrived there. Probably, it was the next day. Although it is recorded from three different points of view in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; it is clearly the same event. When we consolidate the three stories with what we know from John about the first part of Jesus' ministry we have clearer view. Of course, each gospel writer had a different audience in mind and a different aspect of Christ's mission in view, so it is natural that

each had a different emphasis. However, it is critical to have the whole story in view. God did not give us all four Gospels by accident. He intended us to use all of them. The first two accounts of this event by Matthew and Mark were abbreviated versions. Perhaps, because both had been believers during the ministry of Christ, the background was so familiar that it didn't need explaining. We will study their accounts first.

**Matthew 4:18** **As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.**

**Mark 1:16** **As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.**

In both Matthew's account and Mark's account Simon Peter and Andrew were mentioned first. Evidently, when Jesus first saw them, they were still casting their nets as they finished up a fruitless night of fishing. According to Luke 5, as Jesus continued to teach and the crowd continued to gather, they finally gave up and landed their boats to wash their nets.

**Matthew 4:19-20** **“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”<sup>6</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.**

**Mark 1:17-18** **“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.**

Following Jesus' injunction, the two men left what they were doing and followed Jesus. That doesn't mean the boats were deserted, only that they were left with other workers who had been in the boat. Such boats required more than two men to handle the oars, sails, and nets. We know they could seat at least thirteen men. These other men were probably the men who had worked on the boat while James and John and Peter and Andrew had been in Judea for the last year following Jesus.

You should understand that Andrew, Peter, James and John had been Jesus' followers for over a year, since His earlier first Galilean ministry. However, they evidently hadn't recognized that they were to be full time disciples, and not fishermen until this call.

**Matthew 4:21-22** **Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.**

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<sup>6</sup> *The great adversary Satan is also a fisher of men: Habakkuk 1:14-15 “You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad.”*

**Mark 1:19-20** When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Matthew and Mark only brought James and John into the story at that point. Matthew added that Zebedee, their father, was with them. They had also been preparing their nets by washing them. We only find out from Luke that James and John had originally been in their boat fishing alongside of the boat of Peter and Andrew when Jesus first saw both boats. There had then been a whole adventure after they landed, and Jesus first saw them washing their nets. It was only after that adventure that He told them to follow Him.

The account of Luke gives us the most complete account of the events of that morning.

**Luke 5:1-2** One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,<sup>7</sup> with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.

Jesus had risen early in the morning, and as a crowd had gathered, He began to preach. According to Matthew and Mark, He had first looked out and seen the boat of Peter and Andrew still fishing. As the crowd gathered, Jesus found Himself down by the waterside. He realized that He needed to find a place where He could preach to the growing crowd without His voice being smothered by the crowd. He looked down at the shore, and He saw the two boats of Peter and Andrew and James and John where they were washing their nets. He realized the boats gave Him both an opportunity to teach the crowd more effectively and then to teach the four disciples an important lesson. He had undoubtedly noticed that they had been missing from among those disciples who had been by His side since the wedding at Cana.

**Luke 5:3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that this lake is called by three names in history: the Sea of Galilee, Lake Gennesaret (or Gennesareth), and the Sea of Tiberias. They are all the same body of water. Galilee was the region in which the lake is located. Gennesaret was the name of the valley which borders the middle of the western side of the lake which was the most fruitful region in Israel. Gennesaret was just south of Capernaum and was the name of the region in which it lay. Tiberias was the name of the town which bordered the lake and was the most famous and prosperous city in the region for many centuries (the name has remained Tiberias even under the Arabs and Turks up to the present day). It was named after the Roman Emperor Tiberius who reigned at the time Herod Antipas built the city.

Jesus saw the answer to his dilemma. He could speak to the people from the boat. Being early in the morning, the wind would have been calm and the acoustics would have been great for speaking.

**Luke 5:4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”**

We aren't told how long Jesus spoke, but after He had finished, He told Peter to cast out into the deep water where fishing usually took place. He was about to teach the four disciples a lesson without uttering a word.

**Luke 5:5 Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”**

Peter the fisherman, wasn't happy about taking advice about fishing from a carpenter. However, out of respect he grudgingly relented.

**Luke 5:6-7 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.**

After they let down the nets, the nets began to break under the strain of all the fish. Even with the nets breaking, they caught so many fish that they filled their boats and the boats of their partners, James and John to the gunwales (*the top edge of a boat - pronounced gunnels*).

**Luke 5:8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”**

At this point, Peter understood the lesson Jesus was teaching and recognized the sin in his absence of faith. He confessed that he wasn't worthy to be in Jesus' inner circle.

**Luke 5:9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.**

This tells us that James, John, and their father Zebedee had some sort of partnership with Peter and his brother Andrew in the fishing business. It was probably Zebedee who had managed to make sure that both boats were at least partially productive while the four disciples had been gone.

**Luke 5:10 Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”**

Jesus dismissed Peter's effort to disqualify himself to be Jesus' disciple.

**Luke 5:11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.**

At this point, they pulled their boats out of the water, possibly as a declaration that they had learned the lesson and were dedicating themselves to being Jesus' full-time disciples. The story doesn't tell us who unloaded the fish, but it was almost certainly Zebedee and the hired hands.

We know from John that the disciples had just come from Judea with Jesus where He had been teaching for ten months. Even Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus had just arrived back in Galilee. Whether all of the disciples had spent the whole year there with Jesus or not we are not told, but they had to have spent at least some months away from their profession of fishing. We know that at least one of them (Peter) was married, and likely others of the four (John, James, Peter, and Andrew) were married as well. They had just arrived back in Capernaum where their boats were. As winter was drawing to a close, it was almost at the beginning of the best fishing season. They must have felt like they had been shirking their livelihood. They tried to make up for it by fishing all night and into the morning, but they had caught nothing. They brought their boats back to shore early in the morning and beached them and started washing their nets. Then they saw Jesus, coming along the shore, preaching to the multitudes. Jesus saw them and their boats. He was so pressed in by the multitudes that he couldn't speak effectively, so He motioned to them to bring him one of the boats. He got into it to finish speaking from just a little way offshore. It must have been early, before the wind was even stirring. The boat was the perfect place to speak from. After He was through speaking, the disciple's hearts must have convicted them. His words burned in their hearts. He was the man who they felt would change the world. He was reaping the fields of lost souls and they had been pursuing fish. Jesus turned to Peter and told him to cast out into the deep. When they did, He told them to let down the net. They did. Immediately such an incredible catch of fish swarmed into their nets that it almost sank the boat of Peter and Andrew. Just so the lesson wouldn't be lost on James and John the surplus of the catch in Peter's net was transferred to their boat and almost sank it as well. In a few minutes, they had caught a year's worth of fish. These weren't small boats. They were 25 to 30 feet in length. The lesson was not lost on any of them. Peter, as usual, was the spokesman for the group. He understood how little faith he had displayed in going fishing when Christ was among them. He had witnessed so many miracles of the Lord and had begun to understand exactly who He was. To have thought of abandoning his much higher calling because he was worried about making a living made Peter ashamed. Just to make it perfectly clear, Jesus said to them "Come, follow me. - From now on you will catch men." They must have left everything (the catch, the nets, and the boats) for Zebedee and the hired men to handle. Even Zebedee must have understood that the former partners in fishing had much more important things to do.

Matthew and Mark left out the whole episode between them cleaning their nets, and Jesus calling them. Both Matthew and Mark take up the story of Jesus' ministry at this time, so there was nothing in their account to indicate the length of time the disciples had been with Jesus, or about their trip to Judea. So, they didn't have the full context for this story. Luke didn't dwell on the details of the ministry in Judea the way that John did, but he clearly indicated that the disciples had been with Jesus outside of Galilee for some time in Luke 4. As a result, Luke could tell the story in the proper context. Although John doesn't include the story at all, his

account makes it clear that the disciples had been with Jesus for most of the previous year and a half. Before I studied this episode in the context of all four gospels, it didn't ring true. As related in just Matthew and Mark, it sounded like Jesus was walking along the shore and saw some fishermen who were relative strangers. It sounded like He then told them to follow him, and they left everything immediately without a thought and devoted the rest of their lives to Him. That did not sound like the behavior of any believers I have known or of which I have ever heard. However, in the context of all four gospels together we see something happening that has happened to almost every one of us who are seeking the Lord. Our obedience develops in stages.

Jesus had to repeat the lesson after His resurrection, when the fishermen among the disciples again spent the day fishing, and Jesus appeared to them standing on the shore. That story will be told later in John 21.

### **The Jewish Calendar <sup>8</sup>**

In my studies, you will notice an emphasis on exact calendar dates. One of the most important things I had to understand to construct a precise chronology of the life of Christ was the Jewish calendar. The first important thing to understand is that the Jewish Calendar is based on lunar months. The first day of each month is marked by the appearance of the New Moon. The middle of the month is always the full moon.

There is a clear indication from both the Bible and secular sources that when God restored the world in Genesis 1, He instituted a perfect chronological system whereby the earth circled the Sun every 360 days, and the Moon circled the Earth every 30 days. There were exactly twelve months to a year. Every month was exactly one cycle of the moon. That this system was in effect at the time of Noah's flood is shown by a logical examination of the following verses:

Genesis 7:11 "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened."

Genesis 7:24 "The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days."

Genesis 8:1 "But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded."

Genesis 8:4 "and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat."

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<sup>8</sup> *This repeats much of the information on the Jewish calendar given on lesson 1, pp. 11-15*

We must conclude that the Ark came to rest at Ararat the day the waters began to recede. The Ark couldn't have come to rest before that. Genesis clearly states that this was a period of 150 days. This period is also described as from "the seventeenth day of the second month" to "the seventeenth day of the seventh month." Logic forces us then to conclude that at that time five months was 150 days or 30 days to the month. At the present time five lunar months would be 147½ days. We also therefore have to conclude that there has been a change in the cycles of the moon since Noah's time.

1 Chronicles 27:1-15 indicates that at the time of David there were only 12 months a year. We also know that each month <sup>9</sup> begins with the new moon, and the times of the Feasts of First Fruits, Pentecost, and Tabernacles were timed to coincide with the harvest season. A lunar calendar with twelve months a year would have lost 9½ days a year to the seasons. If a 365¼ day year had been in effect in Moses' time, after 20 years, the harvest ingathering feast would be celebrated in the dead of winter. God is not stupid!

We know from history that, at least back to the 8th Century BC, the Babylonians recorded the months as being 29½ days, and yet from even more ancient Babylonian astronomers we inherited the 360-degree circle. The renowned scientist, Sir Isaac Newton was also a devout Christian. He was convinced that this 360-degree circle was based on the fact that the Babylonians of that time observed the complete cycle of the stars in 360 days. In other words, each degree stood for one day. At some time, possibly at the time of Hezekiah's prayer in the 8th Century BC, <sup>10</sup> the cycle of the earth around the sun was altered from 360 days to 365¼ days, and the cycle of the moon around the earth was altered from 30 days to 29½ days. Some years ago, I read a paper by a scientist who wrote that according to the laws of physics a decrease of the speed of orbit of the earth around the sun from 360 days to 365¼ days would be naturally followed by an increase of the speed of the orbit of the moon around the earth from 30 days to 29½ days. Unfortunately, I can't remember his name or where I found it on the internet.

This is all very interesting and testifies to the accuracy of the Biblical account of ancient times, but what does it have to do with our study? Simply this. After this change in the heavens the Jews adjusted their calendar. They were not stupid either. They knew, along with the rest of the ancient world, that there had been a change.<sup>11</sup> They changed to a calendar which added a thirteenth month as needed.<sup>12</sup> The schedule of when they added a thirteenth month to keep the

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<sup>9</sup> *It hardly seems necessary to point out that the word "month" is literally "moonth" or "cycle of the moon."*

<sup>10</sup> **Isaiah 38:7-8** "This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.' So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down." **Also 2 Kings 20:11**

<sup>11</sup> *The story of how the Babylonians came to Hezekiah's court because they had heard that the reason lay in Israel is instructive and provocative (Isaiah 39).*

<sup>12</sup> *Of course, one of the great contributions of Julius Caesar was the Julian Calendar. His calendar kept 12 months in a year but abandoned the lunar cycle as the basis for the length of*

distortion at a minimum was dictated by mathematics, not by whim. The decree was issued annually, as a matter of form, from Jerusalem or Palestine until the 4th Century AD when the Christianized Roman Government started interfering with the issuance of the decree in order to help destroy the influence of Palestine and to fragment Judaism. Consequently, at that time the Jewish authorities instead issued a table which could be followed from year to year indefinitely without direct instruction from Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> The Jews still follow that schedule, and it was certainly that same table (though unpublished) which was in force in the time of Jesus. When the Roman Church went back to establish a schedule for celebrating Easter apart from the Jewish Calendar, they nonetheless obviously relied on the Jewish schedule to discover the Julian date for the first Easter.<sup>14</sup>

However, those in the modern church who are aware of this calendar seem to have decided to ignore it. However, I think that most are just unaware of it. That is sad, because the use of it helps bring all the dates of the Bible into harmony with the rest of the Bible and with history.

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*the month. Our modern western calendar follows basically the same pattern that Julius Caesar instituted in 45 BC, although it was slightly modified by Pope Gregory in 1582 AD. The Julian Calendar was substituted for the previous Roman calendar which had intercalary months added to adjust the calendar to the seasons, just like the Jewish Calendar. Under the ancient Roman system those extra (or intercalary) months had to be decreed by the Pontifex Maximus (leader of the Roman religion). By Julius Caesar's time there had been many stretches when the intercalary months had been omitted due to confusion in the Roman state. Julius Caesar was a man who liked order, so when he found himself filling both the posts of ruler of the state, and Pontifex Maximus, he decreed an entirely new calendar system. Because it made sense, it stuck.*

<sup>13</sup> *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People, Edited by Eli Barnavy 1992, Schocken Books, New York, page 68 – “Meanwhile, conciliar decisions and Roman legal codes – first those of Theodosius, then of Justinian – redefined the legal and social status of the Jews. To neutralize the influence which Judaism still exercised on the religious life of eastern Christian communities, the Byzantine rulers issued prohibitions on marriage, commercial exchange, and social relations between Jews and Christians. The Council of Nicaea (325), for example, decided to fix a constant date for Easter, a holiday which until then had been celebrated in the Orient on the same day as the Jewish Passover. While the bishops released their faithful from dependence on the Jewish proclamation of the festival, civil authorities intercepted Jewish emissaries who were dispatched from Palestine to inform the Diaspora communities of the order of the calendar. These circumstances were probably the cause for the decision taken by the patriarch Hillel II in 359 to proclaim a permanent calendar calculated mathematically once and for all.”*

<sup>14</sup> *They picked the closest possible year during which Passover fell on Friday, which was 33 AD. This original error magnified the chronology problems a hundred-fold. It resulted in a timetable which had Jesus born four years after the death of Herod the Great.*

It will be useful for you to know something of the Jewish calendar, both from standpoint of its Biblical origins, and the way it worked. To begin with, as per the scripture, the first day of every month was on the new moon.

Numbers 28:11-14 ““On the first of every month, present to the LORD a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; and with each lamb, a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. This is for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. With each bull there is to be a drink offering of half a hin of wine; with the ram, a third of a hin; and with each lamb, a quarter of a hin. This is the monthly burnt offering to be made at each **new moon** during the year.”

The New Moon Festivals on the first of each month were one of the three types of Jewish observances which were held to be most important along with the seventh day Sabbath and the three annual Feasts. The New Moon was only supposed to be celebrated on the day after the night the New Moon was spotted, but of course the priests in Jerusalem knew when it was to be expected from repeated measurement of the lunar cycle. Even so, great pains were taken to ensure actual observation, even to the setting of observation posts out in the generally cloudless southern desert in case visibility was limited. Sightings were relayed very quickly by means of signal fires on mountain tops. In the rare instance when a sighting was not made on the night it might have been expected, the New Moon Festival was observed the next day regardless of whether it could be seen or not. With the New Moon, the month started, and the schedule of Feasts and Holidays were ordered accordingly. Usually, six of the months had 29 days and six of the months had 30, but some years could have it split up with seven months (29 days) and five months (30 days) or five months (29 days) and seven months (30 days).

Two of the three original major feasts of Moses, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Tabernacles. were celebrated on the full moon, which was the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month (Leviticus 23:6, Leviticus 23:33). Later in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Feast of Esther (Purim) also was instituted to be observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> (full moon).<sup>7</sup>