

Lesson 26 - During Spring and Summer of 29 AD

In the last lesson we saw the feeding of the five thousand near Bethsaida after the Twelve had returned from their two-by-two mission and Jesus had heard of the death of John the Baptist. We then saw the return trip by boat from Bethsaida where Jesus came walking to them on the water in the middle of the storm. Finally, we studied Jesus' sermon where He declared He was the bread of life. After that, many turned away from Him.

Matthew 15:1-2 **Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"**

Mark 7:1-5 **The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing wash their hands with the fist, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"**

This episode seems to have taken place not long after Jesus had given His sermon saying that He was the bread of life, the true manna that God had sent from heaven. After that, many of the people had turned away from Jesus. They had looked for a temporal king who would provide them with material prosperity. Jesus offered them Himself as the redeemer, and eternal life and spiritual security. They weren't interested.

Undoubtedly, the Pharisees saw this as a golden opportunity to attack Jesus for not living up to the traditions of the Jews. Jesus evidently refused to perpetuate any of the phony traditions invented by the religious Jews. Those invented ceremonials implied that they could justify themselves before the LORD by patterns of physical existence which had nothing to do with faith in God or the need for a blood atonement. Those ceremonials implied that what God needed to be satisfied was the following of a certain set of rules for external habits. This ignored the grace of God and the love of God and instead made Him into a prudish rule maker.

You should note that the kind of "handwashing" mentioned here was not according to the Mosaic Law, but only according to man-made tradition. Edersheim in his book The Temple Its Ministry & Services, Chapter 12 describes this handwashing. "For when water was poured on the hands, they had to be lifted, yet so that the water should neither run up above the wrist, nor back again upon the hand; best, therefore, by doubling the fingers into a fist. Hence (as Lightfoot rightly remarks) Mark 7:3, should be translated: 'For the Pharisees, except they wash their hands with the fist, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.'"

So it wasn't that Jesus didn't wash His hands, but that He didn't go through the elaborate motions with His hands that the Pharisees had invented.

You will notice that Matthew's Gospel, originally written for the early, mainly Jewish, Christians didn't find it necessary to explain the elaborate Jewish traditions about hand washing. On the other hand, Mark's account, written to the mainly Gentile church in Antioch, needed an explanation.

Matthew 15:3-6 Jesus replied, “**And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’¹ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’² But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.**”

Mark 7:9-13 And he said to them: “**You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.**”

Jesus was pointing out that they had ignored God's command to take care of their parents to honor the so-called “Law of Corban.” This was a practice invented by the religious leaders to encourage donations. The Law of Corban (also spelled Korban or Qorbon) was a practice by which persons could declare that their property or estate was to be donated to the Temple after their death. In the meantime, their estate would be free from any outside obligations. Thus, they could live an exorbitant lifestyle and let their parents or creditors starve to death.

Matthew 15:7-9 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “**“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”**”

Mark 7:6-8 He replied, “**Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ““These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.”**”

¹ *Exodus 28:12*

² *Exodus 21:17*

Jesus quoted the LORD's prophecy recorded by Isaiah in Isaiah 29:13. Jesus certainly didn't pull any punches here. He roasted the hypocritical greed of the Pharisees. He knew there was no way of winning them with kindness, so He hit them with the unvarnished truth about themselves.

In Mark's account the preceding comments are recorded before Jesus' comment on honoring parents. In Matthew's account it is recorded after. I have copied both in the same order in this study for easier comprehension.

Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, **“Listen and understand. What goes into a man's mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’”**

Mark 7:14-16 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, **“Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.”**³

The Pharisee's idea behind the ceremonial handwashing was that if you didn't do it, the food you ate was unclean and therefore you were unclean. They ignored the fact that all real sin originated with a mental attitude that was contrary to God. They turned sin into a physical act rather than the mental attitude behind that act. From that mental attitude came sinful thoughts that were expressed by physical acts.

Matthew 15:12-13 Then the disciples came to him and asked, **“Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”** He replied, **“Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.**

Jesus' disciples were still concerned about offending the Pharisees. They couldn't see that the Pharisees way of thinking would never be reconciled Christ's teaching. The Pharisees were an irreconcilable enemy. Furthermore, they were an enemy destined for eternal destruction.

Matthew 15:14 Leave them (*disregard*);⁴ they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

In fact, the Pharisees who were considered the experts on the Law were totally blind to the truth and were guides only to ways which led to destruction.

³ The NIV omits the last phrase of Mark 7:16 which is in the Textus Receptus “If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.” I have added it.

⁴ The Greek word here is ἀφίημι {ä-fē'-ā-mē} which literally means “to send away” but here has more the meaning “disregard.”

Matthew 15:15-16 Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.” “Are you still so dull?”⁵ Jesus asked them.

Mark 7:17-18a After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “Are you so dull?” he asked.

What Peter called “a parable” was really a simple analogy. Jesus was exasperated that they were still so slow that they had to have everything spelled out in detail.

Matthew 15:17-20 “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”

Mark 7:18b-23 “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)⁶ He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

What went into a man was food. It couldn’t make anyone spiritually unclean (although it could make someone physically sick). What Jesus was talking about that came out of a man was speech which reflected the sin (uncleanness) of a man’s heart. It was the hearts of men that the Pharisees should have been concerned with.

Matthew 15:21-23 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.⁷ A **Canaanite** woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, **Son of David**, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

Mark 7:24-26 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as

⁵ In that case Jesus was not teaching in a parable. Jesus was speaking clearly, but Peter could not see it.

⁶ Those foods that were “unclean” in the Old Testament were only symbolically unclean, not spiritually unclean. It was no coincidence that those foods that were to be avoided as spiritual symbols carried diseases that could be easily contracted by eating.

⁷ There were thousands of Jews that lived in and around Tyre and Sidon although it had always been under Gentile rulers.

she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

In Matthew the woman was described by her race, which was Canaanite. The Canaanites had been the ancient inhabitants of the promised land who had been driven out by Joshua. In Mark the woman was described by her culture and language, which was Greek. She spoke Greek and had grown up with the Greek culture which had been imposed by the Greek conquerors after Alexander the Great had taken the Persian Empire. The difference in the description points out the different emphasis of Matthew and Mark. Matthew was written to the Jews, and Mark was written to the Grecian culture of the Gentiles of Antioch. Matthew wanted to make clear to the Jews that even those they despised the most, the Canaanites, were included in the Grace of God. Mark was pointing out to the Greeks of Antioch that they were included in the grace of God.

Matthew 15:24-27 **He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs ⁸ that fall from their masters’ table.”**

Mark 7:27-28 **“First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”**

Clearly this woman knew all about Jesus. She had also called Him the “son of David.” That was another Jewish name for “Messiah.” She must have been one of those Gentile women who liked to go to the synagogues which were in Gentile territories and listened to the Scriptures being taught.⁹ She must have heard Him teach and her heart had been touched.

Here, Matthew made a point of reminding the Jews that Jesus had spent His incarnation appealing to the Jews. All His close disciples were Jews. You may remember that He even sent away the Gentile out of whom He had cast the legion of demons. This was even though that Gentile had wanted to follow Jesus. He treated the Jews as His special children even though at that time they had started to turn their backs on Him.

This exchange was also a lesson to his disciples. After the resurrection they would see the Gentiles eagerly eat the fragments of the eternal bread which most of the Jews rejected.

⁸ *Here you should remember the twelve baskets of crumbs that they gathered up after feeding the five thousand.*

⁹ *Josephus asserted that the Gentile women of Damascus were “addicted” to the Jewish religion. Wars of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 2, Chapter 20, Paragraph 2.*

Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Mark 7:29-30 Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus was no doubt impressed by both her faith and humility. He granted her request. More than likely, she and her daughter became founding members of the church that grew up in Tyre which we saw warmly greeting Paul almost thirty years later (Acts 21:3-6).

Matthew 15:29a Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee.

Mark 7:31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.¹⁰

This time Jesus didn’t go down through the territory of Herod Antipas, which was known as Galilee. He went through the Decapolis which was on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Although the Decapolis had a substantial population of Jews,¹¹ the majority of its people were Gentiles, and their culture and language was Greek. This trip to Tyre and Sidon and back to the Decapolis would have covered at least a hundred and twenty miles.

Matthew 15:29b-31 Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Mark 7:32-35 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”). At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

As in Galilee, Jesus backed up the authority of His teaching by miracles of healing. Sometimes when He healed He used spit out of His mouth as part of the healing. The spit came out of Jesus’ mouth that spoke the the Word of God. The spit here was thus a figure of the healing power of the Word of God.

¹⁰ *The Decapolis was a group of ten Hellenistic cities east of the Sea of Galilee at this time. They formed a group because of a similar language, culture, location, and political status. Each was an autonomous city-state but was dependent on Rome.*

¹¹ *The territory of the Decapolis had anciently been the land grant of Gad and Manasseh.*

Mark 7:36-37 **Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”**

As usual, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone about the healing. This was to keep the crowds demanding physical healing from overwhelming those who desired to hear His words. However, the crowds continued to grow.

Matthew 15:32 **Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”**

Mark 8:1-3 **During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.”**

The eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee is much more desolate than the western shore. There were very few villages along that side. The large crowds that were following Jesus had to have come from a long way away, and Jesus had evidently been teaching and healing on the mountainside for three days.

Matthew 15:33-36 **His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?” “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.” He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people.**

Mark 8:4-7 **His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?” “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.**

Since His sermon on the Bread of Life in Capernaum Jesus had to have travelled at least 120 miles. He had travelled from Capernaum up to Tyre and Sidon and then to the Decapolis. If He had been teaching as He went, this could have taken up to a month.

What was available was seven loaves of bread and a few fish. Again, as with the feeding of the five thousand a month earlier, the number seven is prominent. Again, He broke the bread while they were seated on the ground and the disciples fed them.

Matthew 15:37-39 They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of ~~Magadan~~ *Magdala*.¹²

Mark 8:8-10 The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

Edersheim believed that Dalmanutha was located at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee and on the eastern side of the Jordan River in Decapolis. This view also squares with the fact that when Jesus went to Bethsaida, on the far north end of the lake, he was said to be going to “the other side” (Verse 13). As you can see on the map I have attached on page 11, I agree with that location.

Matthew 16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

Mark 8:11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.

Evidently the Pharisees had lost track of Jesus when He went up to Phoenicia and then crossed over to the Decapolis. When they heard He was on the other side of the Jordan from Galilee they crossed over to challenge Him. To challenge Him to show them a sign seemed ridiculous since He had been showing the signs of His Messiahship for over two and a half years. They were the signs that had been reported back to John the Baptist:

Luke 7:22b “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”¹³

Despite all the signs they had been given to them, the Pharisees and Sadducees didn’t have the eyes to see or the ears to hear.

¹² *The Textus Receptus here has Μαγδαλά {mäg-dä'-län}. Μαγαδάν {mä-gä-dä'n} appears in the Codex Sinaiticus. As usual I choose to rely on the Textus Receptus. Magdala was the hometown of Mary Magdalene. It was on the east side of the Lake just east of the Jordan River’s exit from the Sea of Galilee. Some think it was contiguous with Dalmanutha (mentioned here in Mark). Perhaps it was one of the cities like Bethsaida (Aramaic name), which also had a Greek name (Julias). After all, Matthew was written to Aramaic speakers and Mark to Greek speakers. The name probably derived from the Hebrew word מִגְדָּל {mig·däl'} which means “tower.”*

¹³ *See Isaiah 29:18, Isaiah 35:5-6, and Isaiah 61:1*

Matthew 16:2-3 He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

They had already been given more than enough signs. They refused to read the clear signs of the times because of their hard hearts. Besides the signs of the miracles that Jesus had performed, there was the prophecy of seventy weeks in Daniel 9 which should have made clear to them that they were living the time of the Messiah.

Matthew 16:4a A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.”

Mark 8:12 He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.”

The Pharisees seem to have been asking for a sign that He was the Messiah, like God gave to John the Baptist when he baptized Jesus and God spoke to Him from heaven “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” No such sign would be given them. Here Jesus reiterated His promise to give them the sign of Jonah after His death:

Matthew 12:39-40 “He (Jesus) answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’”

When it came, they didn’t pay any attention to that miraculous sign either.

Matthew 16:4b-7 Jesus then left them and went away. When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

Mark 8:13-16 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.” They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

To understand what the disciples were thinking it should be remembered that it was common knowledge that the Pharisees were seeking to kill Jesus. In that day, poison was the most effective way to getting rid of a person without being identified as the culprit. I believe that the disciples thought that Jesus was worried that the Pharisees and Sadducees were going to try to

kill Him by poisoning His food. Therefore, they thought He was warning them to be cautious about buying any bread from an unknown source that might be poisoned. Of course, that wasn't His point at all!

Matthew 16:8 **Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”**

Mark 8:17a **Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread?”**

Jesus wasn't talking about real bread or real yeast at all. When He accused them of having “little faith” He was talking about “faith” in the sense of **what** is believed, not in the sense of intensity of belief. He was accusing them of lack of understanding. Among other things, they didn't understand that there was no one and nothing that could kill Jesus until the Father allowed it.

Matthew 16:9-10 **Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?**

Mark 8:17b-21 **Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”**

At the very least they should have understood that provision of bread wasn't a problem from the fact that He had twice fed many thousands of people from nothing.

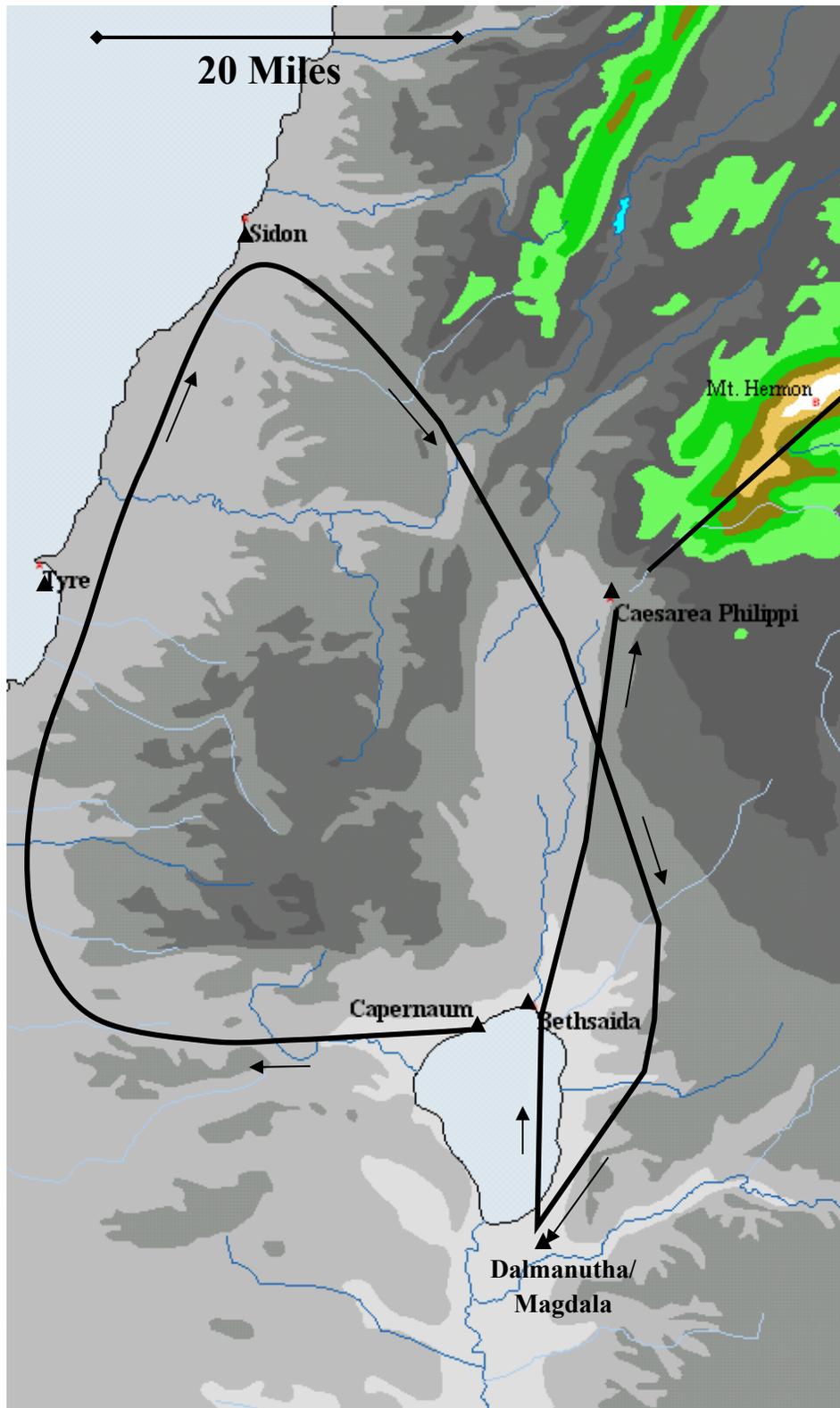
Matthew 16:11-12 **How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

By now they should have understood that both bread and the yeast which makes it leavened (or ritually unclean) were metaphors for spiritual things. Finally, the light dawned, and they realized what He was speaking about.

Of course, the account in any of the Gospels of any conversation of Jesus wasn't a word for word record. However, they are accurate depictions of some of the ideas that were presented. In Matthew's account the thinking of the Pharisees and Sadducees was warned against (Matthew 16:6), but the thinking of Herod wasn't. In Mark, the thinking of the Pharisees and Herod was

warned against (Mark 8:15), but the thinking of the Sadducees wasn't. Undoubtedly, in the actual conversation, all three were mentioned. All three parties had different points of view, and distrusted each other, but all three wanted to kill Jesus.

From Capernaum to Mt. Hermon



Mark 8:22a **They came to Bethsaida,**

As you will notice, they didn't return to Herod Antipas' territories, but crossed all the way back to Bethsaida on the north side of the Sea of Galilee in Herod Philip's territory in Gaulanitis where Jesus had fed the five thousand.

Mark 8:22b-23a **and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village.**

The first thing we notice is that Jesus led the man outside of the village. This was probably so that He wouldn't then be thronged by people seeking healing.

Mark 8:23b **When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"**

Instead of touching the man, He went through the process of using His spit like He had with the deaf and dumb man in Mark 7:33. Again the symbolism is unmistakable. That which came out of Jesus' mouth (the saliva) stood for the Word (which also came out of Jesus' mouth). The result of the application of the saliva to the physical eyes plus the laying on of Jesus' hands caused the man to see. This symbolized what would happen to the understanding of any man who had the Word of God applied to the eyes of his soul. He would begin to see the Spiritual things of this life and would begin to understand that they were far more important.

Mark 8:24-26 **He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes.¹⁴ Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."**

This is a striking passage. Remember, Jesus had healed thousands that weren't recorded in scripture. Why was this one recorded? Was it because Jesus' healing was seemingly inefficient the first time? Consider the testimony by some that angels have been described as being as big as trees. The cherubim in the Solomon's Temple were represented as being 15 feet tall (1 Kings 6:26). I believe it is likely that what this man saw at first were angelic beings, even as Elijah's servant saw the angelic armies in 2 Kings 6:15-18.¹⁵ I like this interpretation because instead of suggesting the Lord's first healing was short of sufficient, it suggests it was beyond sufficient. It was extraordinary. The second healing dialed it back. It also suggests the extraordinary

¹⁴ *This time He did not spit on the man's eyes.*

¹⁵ *2 Kings 6:16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."*

dimension of this healing which was beyond the other miraculous healings. That qualified it for special mention in the Scripture.

***The Great Question – Who do you say I am?
Six Days before the Mount of Transfiguration - Time - August 29 AD***

Matthew 16:13a When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi,

Mark 8:27a Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.

Luke 9:18a Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him,

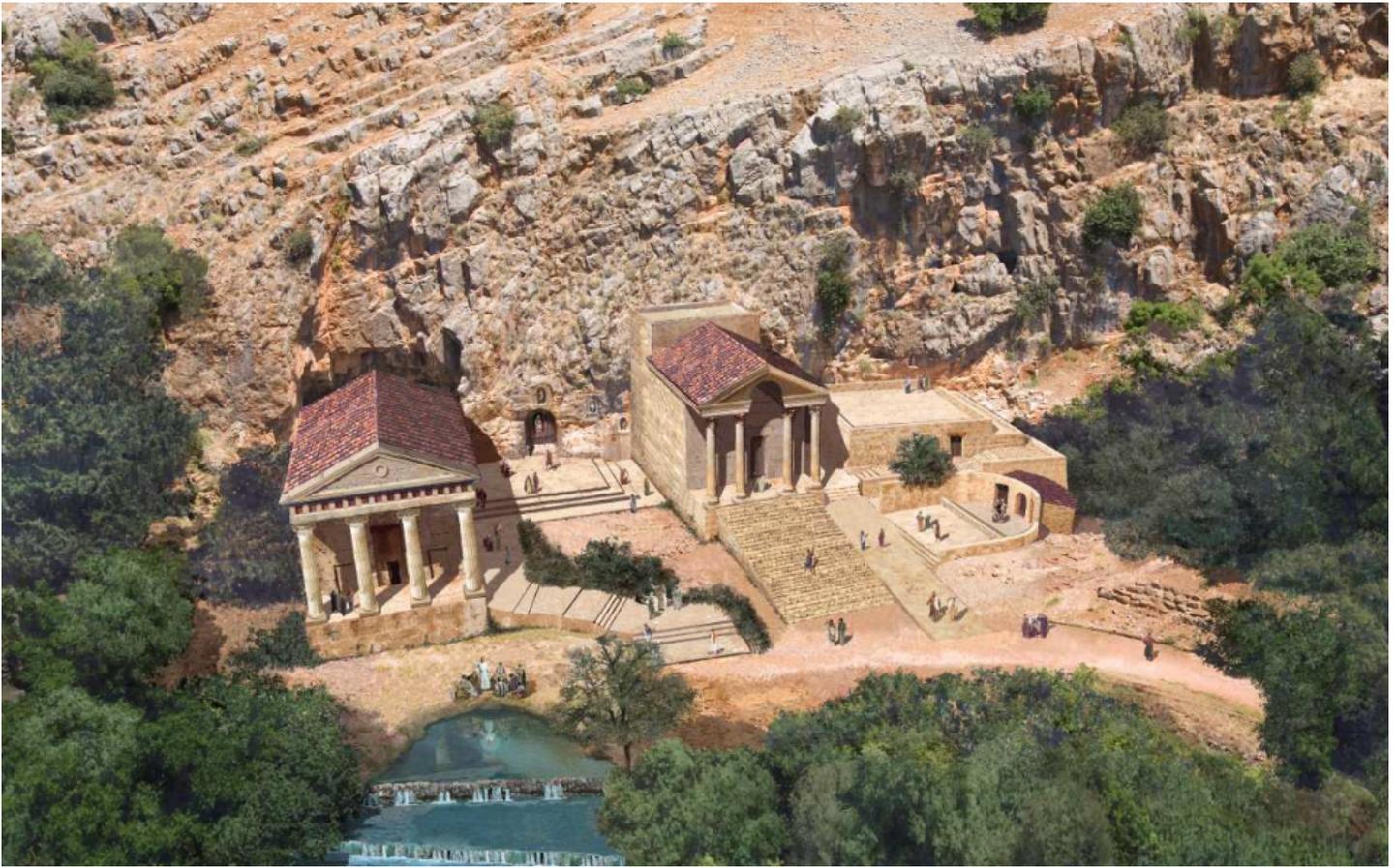
You will notice that the Gospels only say that Jesus went to the region and the villages around Caesarea Philippi. It does not say that He entered it. Caesarea Philippi was a predominantly Gentile city which was about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and 8 miles southwest of Mt. Hermon. It was the administrative capital of Herod Philip, Herod Antipas's brother. It had been rebuilt and renamed in the joint honor of Augustus Caesar who had ruled the Roman Empire at the time of its reconstruction, and of Herod Phillip who at that time ruled that area as Tetrarch. It stood on the site where the emerging Jordan River bursts from underground after it has flowed unseen for a time from its origin in the snows of Mt. Hermon. It was an apt place for Jesus to finally affirm who He was. At the time of Jesus' visit there were two pagan temples there. One was built to honor "the god" Augustus Caesar and the other was built to honor the Greek "god" Pan. On the next page you will see an artist's representation of what those temples looked like in Christ's day. They were built at the entrance to the cave out of which the Jordan emerged.

Matthew 16:13b-15 he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist;¹⁶ others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Mark 8:27b-29a On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Luke 9:18b-19 he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Perhaps they recognized that the teaching and the power of the Holy Spirit they had heard from John the Baptist was very similar to that of Jesus Christ.



Artist's Painting of the Pagan Temple outside of Caesarea Philippi in Christ's Time

Of course, we saw that Herod somehow thought that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead.¹⁷ Others of the Jews evidently thought He was Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah. Others thought that He was another of the ancient prophets resurrected. Few of the people recognized that He was the LORD's Messiah.

Matthew 16:16 Simon Peter¹⁸ answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Mark 8:29b-30 Peter answered, "You are the Christ. "Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Luke 9:20b Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

As usual, Peter was the first to speak. This didn't mean that the other disciples didn't believe the same way (except for Judas Iscariot). All of them had seen all the miracles. They had also heard Jesus give to the disciples of John the Baptist the signs of His Messiahship.

¹⁷ *Matthew 14:2, Mark 6:14.*

¹⁸ *Only in Matthew is Peter called by his Jewish name, Simon.*

Matthew 16:17-20 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

This separate conversation with Peter is only recorded in Matthew which was written primarily for the Jews. Perhaps this was because Peter’s mission was primarily to the Jews. Mark and Luke were originally written to primarily Gentile churches, and they omit this conversation. The Catholic Church has misused this passage for fifteen centuries and taken it to claim that because Peter died in Rome, the Pope in Rome has primacy over the rest of the church. I will deal further with this passage and that faulty interpretation in the next lesson.

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem ¹⁹ and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, ~~chief priests~~ *high priests* and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and ~~on~~ *since* the third day be raised to life.

Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, ~~chief priests~~ *high priests* and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Luke 9:22 And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, ~~chief priests~~ *high priests* and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and ~~on~~ *since* the third day be raised to life.”

Jesus was in the final year of His life and now most of the people had turned their backs on Him. He was preparing the disciples to deal with His crucifixion. Although His crucifixion would end with His victory cry, “It is finished!” it would seem like a disaster to them.

The phrases “the third day,” and “after three days” which we find here have caused some confusion in the chronology of the last week. Just in this episode, Matthew and Luke called it “the third day.” Mark called it “after the third day.” However, in Matthew 12:40, Jesus had made it clear that He would spend “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” In both the Matthew and Luke passages, in the Greek there is no preposition “on,” although the NIV supplies an “on” for this Matthew passage. However, in the Mark passage there is the preposition μετά {me-tä} which means “after.” Evidently, the phrase, “the third day” can be better translated as “since the third day.” We would understand that to mean that all three days have passed. It is significant that the Gospel of Matthew contains all three descriptions: the third

¹⁹ Only the Gospel of Matthew (written to the Jews) made the point that Christ had to die in Jerusalem as had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

day, after the third day, and three days and three nights. To me, that indicates that they were all meant to indicate the same thing. We will deal this issue and my above conclusion in detail in a later lesson which records the third day resurrection.

Matthew 16:22-23 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Mark 8:32-33 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

It is stunning to see how quickly the Lord’s compliment had turned Peter’s head. He even had the arrogance and gall to rebuke the Lord. We should also keep in mind that Peter still had the idea that when Jesus was installed as King, Peter would be one of his prime ministers. He didn’t want to let that dream go.

Peter was not indwelt by Satan, but from his flesh, he was speaking from a faulty understanding of God. He was speaking here from Satan’s viewpoint. In a way Satan’s faulty understanding of the LORD helped defeat Satan. He could never believe that Jesus would become a servant and die a humiliating and excruciatingly painful death for the sins of mankind. Satan even helped put Jesus on the cross, never understanding that Jesus, the Son of God, had come for that very purpose. He never understood that the testament of the Cross proved the love of God for all His creatures (including Satan). It was the final argument which demonstrated the justice of Satan’s condemnation by the LORD.

It is also instructive to remember that within the same hour that Peter spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit he also spoke words inspired by Satan. The lesson to us is this: Do not depend too much on the words of men, even believers! Always be prepared to compare their words with God’s Word.

Luke’s Gospel omits this conversation of the Lord with Peter. It is only in Matthew and Mark.

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself ²⁰ and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Mark 8:34-35 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For

²⁰ *Leviticus 23:29* “Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people.”

whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Luke 9:23-24 Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

When we read here that Jesus talked about taking up a cross, we should remember that at that time no one understood that Jesus must die on a cross. This statement was evidently made to be understood later after the crucifixion of Christ. So, what does this mean? To me it means that, like Jesus, we must unhesitatingly follow God’s will for our life wherever it leads, knowing that God is in control of the outcome, and that if we take up that cross, the final outcome will be a great blessing both in time and in eternity.

Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8:36-37 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Luke 9:25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

The important and lasting parts of a person’s life aren’t the things they acquire or the worldly status they achieve. The real and eternal things in a person’s life are related to their immaterial soul and its relationship to the Eternal God.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Luke 9:26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Besides the rewards of contentment in this life, a close relationship with the Lord in this life will bring special rewards that will last throughout eternity. Anyone who puts that relationship second will lose those rewards.

Matthew 16:28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Mark 9:1 And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

Luke 9:27 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

The “some” that Jesus was talking about were James, John, and Peter who would see the transfiguration of Jesus on Mt. Hermon the next day. That would involve a further revelation of the Kingdom of God.