

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 22

The Ministry of Christ in Galilee –28 A.D. and 29 A.D.

In the last four lessons we have studied incidents and teachings that were scattered through the time of Jesus' ministry in Galilee in 28 and 29 A.D. after He returned from His year in Judea. During this period, He gathered a core of faithful disciples who followed Him nearly everywhere. It included both men and women. It probably numbered something over a hundred people. Out of this group He called the Twelve who He always kept by His side. During this period, He delivered the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. In this lesson we continue with a study of His teaching of that period and the incidents which happened to Him.

Luke 7:36 **Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.**

The record of this episode is only in Luke's Gospel. Even though Jesus knew that most of the Pharisees wanted to see Him dead, he agreed to have dinner with this one.

Luke 7:37-38 **When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she ~~stood~~ sat ¹ behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.**

Clearly, this was a woman who had opened her heart to the message of Grace that Jesus was teaching. She had seen the truth that Faith could save her. In her heart she had grasped the truth that the prophecy of Isaiah about the promised Christ had spoken about:

Isaiah 52:6-7 "Therefore my people will know my name;² therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,³ who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation (*the First Advent*), who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' (*the Second Advent*)

The perfume for His feet was meant to be symbolic of Jesus' righteous walk and life. Whether or not the woman understood that is debatable, but I think the Holy Spirit moved her to make that choice to underline the fact of Christ's righteousness.

Whatever was the case, she was overcome with emotion when she understood the moment. I think every Christian has probably had a moment like she did and can understand how she felt.

¹ *The Greek word translated "stood" here is ἵστημι {hē'-stā-mē}. It is related to the Greek word στήκω {stā- khō} which means "to remain secure" and is related to the English word "stay." Here it obviously means that she placed herself sitting at Jesus' feet and wouldn't be moved.*

² *Ultimately, the name or reputation of God would be permanently fixed when Jesus was born, died, and was raised again.*

³ *Paraphrased in Romans 10:15.*

Luke 7:39 **When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner.”**

This Pharisee clearly did not understand God’s mercy and the gift of His righteousness. He thought a person could be qualified as righteous before God based on his own works. The Pharisee did not understand that his own sins of pride and arrogance had separated him from God as much as the woman’s sins of immorality had separated her from God. The huge difference between them was that she had since accepted the gift of God’s righteousness through faith, and he had not.

Luke 7:40-42 **Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,”⁴ he said. “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”**

Simon was evidently the name of Jesus’ host. Instead of trying to persuade Simon of his sins of arrogance and pride, Jesus took another tack. He attempted to show him who was the most obedient. The teachers of the Law generally agreed that the most important Law in the Law of Moses was the one imbedded in the “Shema”⁵ of Deuteronomy 6:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 “Hear, O Israel (שמע ישראל: {shā·mah' yis·rā·āl'}): The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.**”

This woman by her actions was demonstrating her love of God. In that she was being supremely obedient. Jesus told the parable of the two debtors to demonstrate the situation. In the parable Simon was meant to see that he and the woman were represented by the two debtors. One of the key points was that they were both debtors. The woman owed a debt for her sin, but so did Simon.

Luke 7:43 **Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.**

⁴ *The Greek word here is διδάσκαλος {dē-dä'-skä-los} which is rightly translated “teacher.” This was the title by which the Pharisees and other religious leaders addressed Jesus. In the Hebrew the word they actually used was “Rabbi” (John 1:38). Sometimes “Rabbi” was also the title used by Jesus’ disciples, but more often they called Him “Lord.”*

⁵ *The term “Shema” is used by extension to refer to the whole part of the daily prayers of the Jews that commences with “Shema Yisrael” and comprises Deuteronomy 6:4–9.*

Simon saw that the one with the greater debt had more reason to love the one who cancelled the debt. However, he hadn't made the connection of himself and the woman to the parable. Jesus then made the connection for him.

Luke 7:44-47 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

The woman with the great debt of sin had expressed her love for the one who had brought her salvation and forgiveness. In the meantime, Simon who also was under the condemnation of sin had no gratitude for the debt Jesus was going to cancel by the death He was going to die. Unfortunately, Simon did not even accept that He was in debt or had any sins to forgive. He also didn't accept that Jesus was the one who was bringing the salvation that Isaiah had prophesied.

Luke 7:48-49 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

Most of the guests of Simon the Pharisee were probably other Pharisees, or likeminded. They were offended that Jesus assumed the authority to forgive sins.

Luke 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Jesus made clear that it was the woman's faith that saved her. It was not the tears that she shed or the fact that she had kissed His feet. It was that saving faith which had produced that outflowing of works.

Luke 8:1-3 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

This doesn't limit the number of people who usually travelled with Jesus to 15, it just names some of them. Not too long after this Jesus sent out seventy from among His disciples to go into the towns ahead of him.⁶ They also must have been among his usual followers. As I mentioned in Lesson 16 on John 4:46-53, Joanna the wife of Cuza was probably the mother of the son of

⁶ *Luke 10:1 in the Textus Receptus.*

the Royal official whose healing was described there. I should point out that beyond the three women mentioned here, it says there were many others.

Matthew 11:20-21a **Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Korazin!”**



As seen on the above map, Korazin was about two and a half miles north of Capernaum on a hill above the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There is no visit recorded to Korazin in scriptures, yet it is obvious that there were great miracles performed there. This is just a small example of how (in God’s wisdom) much of Jesus’ actual ministry is left out of the Gospels.

Matthew 11:21b **Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.**

As seen above, Bethsaida was about five miles east of Korazin. The only miracle recorded in Bethsaida was the healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22, yet it says here that many miracles were performed there. Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). After the Cross and Pentecost, many Gentiles from that area would become believers.⁸

⁷ “Korazin” is also rendered as “Chorazin” in some of the English translations.

⁸ Acts 21:3, Acts 27:3.

Matthew 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

In the years to come, Tyre and Sidon were much more receptive to the Gospel than the Jews ever were. In fact, historically, they have remained an enclave of Christianity (Lebanon) in the Middle East, even up to today.

Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

This helps define the level of acceptance of most of the people of Galilee during Jesus' ministry there. It particularly speaks to the people of Capernaum where Jesus had spent much of His time. They felt exultant to have a resident draw so much attention to their small town. They reveled in His celebrity. However, there was very little real faith there.

Matthew 11:24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom⁹ on the day of judgment than for you.”¹⁰

This is comparing the unrepentant of Sodom and the unrepentant of Capernaum at the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers. Those of Capernaum would have much more with which to rebuke themselves for not believing after all the miracles which they had seen Christ perform.

Matthew 11:25-26 At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

This was evidently a public prayer imbedded in the message above. The Scribes and the Pharisees were those who thought that they were wise but were blind. In the meantime, because of the ministry of the Spirit that the Father had sent, simple men and women, who listened with the humility of children, were given the understanding of the deep and true wisdom of God.

Matthew 11:27 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

During the Exodus Moses had asked to see the face of the LORD, but the LORD couldn't show it to him then.¹¹ Jesus was “the prophet” that the LORD had promised in Deuteronomy which

⁹ Sodom was destroyed for its wickedness (Genesis 18 & 19).

¹⁰ A similar woe was pronounced on them by Jesus later as He was returning to Judea in Luke 10:13-15.

was sent into the world to reveal God to us in a way we could understand.¹² All revelation about the LORD was centered in Jesus Christ. He was the LORD incarnate.

Matthew 11:28 “**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**

Jesus must have looked out on the multitude of burdened hearts and seen their needless suffering. If they would only take it, He had the gift of rest to give them.

Matthew 11:29-30 **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.¹³ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

One of the foundational keys to the mature Christian life is to look at life with the humility and gentleness of Jesus who was the maker and creator of all things, and yet responded with love and mercy to the general rebellion of men. Paul described that life perfectly:

Philippians 2:4-8 “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

A yoke was what was attached to a beast of burden. To take a yoke requires humility, but it is easy to bear when it is the Lord who helps us bear it.

Matthew 13:24 **Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.**

Here Jesus told another parable concerning seed which was intended to bear. This seed was sown in the field where it would take root.

Matthew 13:25 **But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds *darnel* among the wheat, and went away.**

The Greek word which the NIV translated as “weeds” in this section is ζιζάνιον {zē-zā'-nē-on} which is more specific than just a weed. It referred to a type of plant called “darnel.” The following is from Wikipedia on darnel:

¹¹ *Exodus 33:18-23.*

¹² *Deuteronomy 18:15-19.*

¹³ *Also promised in Jeremiah 6:16 “This is what the LORD says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’”*

Darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) is also known as poison darnel, darnel ryegrass or cockle. It usually grows in the same production zones as wheat and was a serious weed of cultivation. The similarity between these two plants is so great that in some regions, darnel is referred to as "false wheat". It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears. The spikes of *L. temulentum* are more slender than those of wheat. The spikelets are oriented edgewise to the rachis and have only a single glume, while those of wheat are oriented with the flat side to the rachis and have two glumes. The wheat will also appear brown when ripe, whereas the darnel is black.



Tares - Darnel

Wheat

The point of the use of this word in this parable is that these “weeds” look very much like wheat until they mature when they produce black seeds. I have replaced “weeds” in this passage with “darnel.” The King James used the word “tares.”

Matthew 13:26 **When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the *darnel* also appeared.**

Both kinds of seeds sprouted, but it wasn't until the heads formed that the difference was apparent.

Matthew 13:27-28 “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the *darnel* come from?’ “An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

The servants were appalled and wondered how it happened. The owner knew who was responsible.

Matthew 13:29 “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the *darnel*, you may root up the wheat with them.

Clearly the roots of the two plants would be intertwined in the soil. To have pulled up the darnel would have pulled up the wheat along with it.

Matthew 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the *darnel* and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Although it would take extra labor at the harvest, the only answer was to let them both grow together until then.

Matthew 13:33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast (*leaven*) that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Luke 13:20-21 Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast (*leaven*) that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Jesus told this parable more than once. The time he told it in Luke was when He was teaching in Judea not long before His visit to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). This parable seems to be in the same vein as the parable about the wheat and the darnel (tares). In scripture yeast always speaks of corruption. All offerings of bread in the Temple had to be unleavened (free of leaven). The woman in this parable seems to represent the introduction of sin (leaven) into mankind. We should understand that sin has become thoroughly mixed into our flesh. It is a principal of God’s truth which we must understand.

Matthew 13:34-35 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Quoting Psalms 78:2

It had been prophesied that the Messiah's teaching would be in parables.

Matthew 13:36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the *darnel* in the field."

The following was an explanation of the parable to his real disciples.

Matthew 13:37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

Christ was the original seed. It was His life and death which would provide all the other seeds to plant in the world:

John 12:23-24 "Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.'"

Matthew 13:38a The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom.

The good seed planted in the world are all the believers who are alive at any time.

Matthew 13:38b-39a The *darnel* are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

The darnel are not only unbelievers, but unbelievers who can look a lot like believers until their fruits (heads) appear.

Matthew 13:39b The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

The end of the age in this case is the end of the Tribulation, the seventieth week of Israel prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27. At that time, all unbelievers will be removed from the earth. Then the Millennium will begin with only believers.

Matthew 13:40 "As the *darnel* are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

Just as darnel growing in a field of wheat were painstakingly gathered up separately and cast into the fire, so will the unbelievers at the end of the Tribulation be cast into hell to await the Great White Throne judgment.

Matthew 13:41-42 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will ~~weed~~ *gather up*¹⁵ out of his

¹⁵ Although the NIV translation "weed" gives the general idea, the Greek words συλλέξουσιν ἐκ actually mean "gather up."

kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

At the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ, all unbelievers, as well as all demons and other fallen angels will be cast off of the face of earth and into hell.

Acts 7:54 indicates that “gnashing of teeth” was a figure of speech that indicated anger and frustration: Acts 7:54 “When they (*the Sanhedrim*) heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him (*Steven*).”

Matthew 13:43 **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

Those who were righteous because they had been given Christ’s righteousness would shine with the light of truth.

Matthew 13:44-46 **“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.**

These two parables together give the same message. Anyone who truly understands the value of an eternal relationship with God will deem it worth more than everything else he has in this world. You will notice that both the treasure and the pearl were purchased legally, by trading every other thing that he had.

Matthew 13:47-50 **“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

The net full of fish represented the people of the world. Some were good (righteous), and some were bad (wicked). Of course, we know that it is only their faith in God that determines whether they were righteous or wicked. Again, the end of the age here represents the end of the Tribulation when the righteous will be left on the earth to begin the Millennium.

Matthew 13:51 **“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied.**

Remember, according to verse 36, these last parables had been spoken to his disciples. These were “those that had ears to hear.”

Matthew 13:52-53 He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.

Those who understood “the kingdom of heaven” as was being revealed by Jesus would begin to understand things about the storeroom of the Law (the Old Testament) which before then had been hidden to them. They would begin to understand old things in a new way, and they would also discover new things that had never been revealed before. This was what Peter later wrote on the same subject:

1 Peter 1:10-12a “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you (*old treasures*), searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (*new treasures*). It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things (*in the storeroom*) that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

The Calming of the Storm and the Demoniac of Gadara of Gadara

During the latter part of that period when the Twelve Disciples were called, the event we are going to look at now occurred. This was when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and then cast a legion of demons out of two Gentiles.

The Crossing and the Storm

Matthew 8:18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake.

Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”

Luke 8:22a One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." NRSV

Here Jesus had a large crowd on the heavily populated mainly Jewish side of the lake (Sea of Galilee). The fact that He abandoned a large crowd to cross to the other, mainly Gentile, side of the lake where he would talk to just two persons besides His committed disciples, seems contrary to what we might have expected. The two following exchanges seem to have taken place while they were getting into the boats.

Matthew 8:19-20 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher,¹⁶ I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

This teacher of the law was probably a scribe or Pharisee who was used to comfortable living. Jesus warned that His followers lived mainly in tents.

Matthew 8:21-22 Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

This doesn't mean that Jesus was telling the man to skip his father's funeral, so that he didn't miss a moment. That is not at all what Jesus was saying. In those days of a mainly agrarian economy, where the wealth of most families was passed from generation to generation, the father owned the land or other capital by which the sons made a living. Until the father died the son was dependent on his father. This disciple of Jesus was not asking if he could take a few hours to go to a funeral. He was asking if he could wait a few years until he buried his father and was economically independent before he started being a fulltime disciple. Jesus was telling him that the thinking he was using was only fit for the “spiritually dead.”

The two exchanges above were similar to what was recorded in Luke 9:57-60 almost a year later. There is no reason to expect that this was not repeated many times as would-be disciples were challenged to understand the demands of discipleship by the Lord.

Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

Matthew 8:23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

Luke 8:22b So they put out, NRSV

From Mark's account, it is clear that while the Twelve were probably with Jesus in His boat, the rest of Jesus' close disciples followed in other boats.

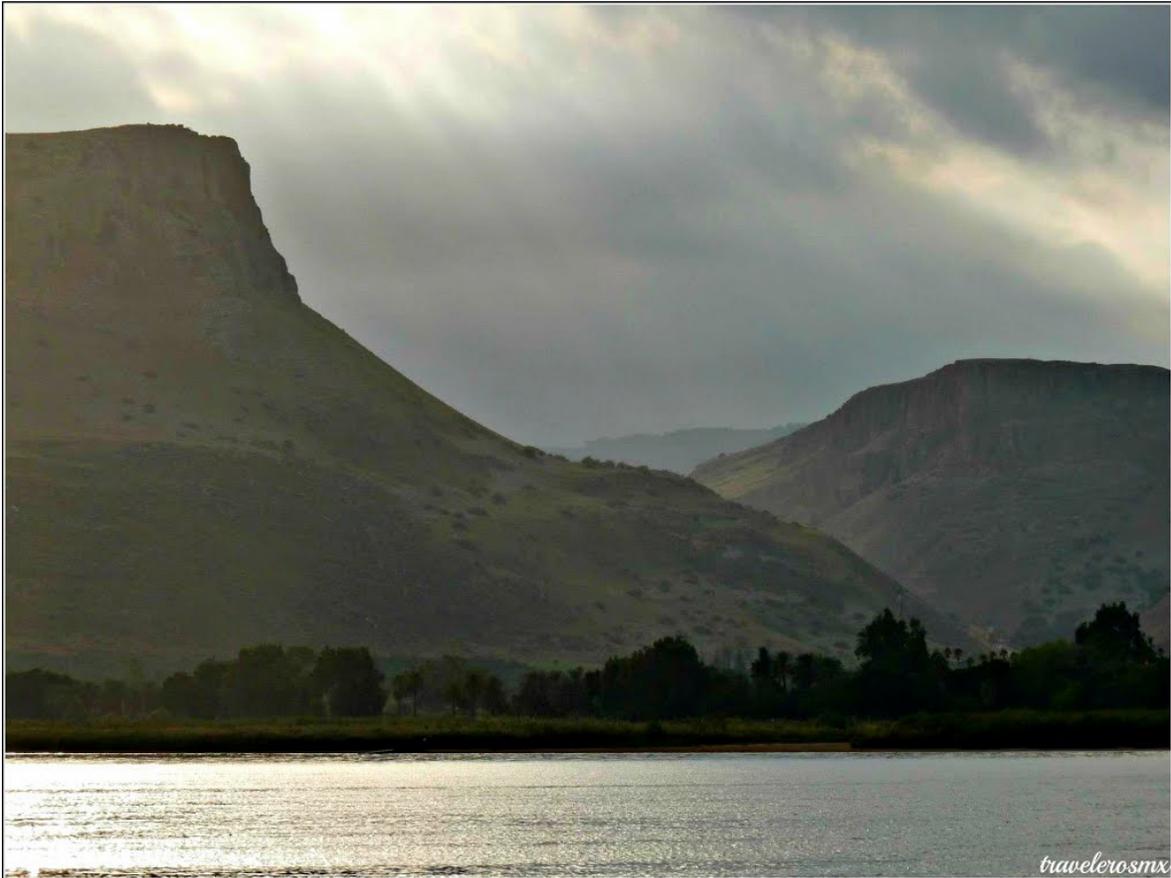
Mark 4:37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

Matthew 8:24 Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.

¹⁶ The Greek word is διδάσκαλος {dē-dä'-skä-los} which can be translated “Teacher,” “Master,” or “Doctor” in the sense of someone who is learned.

Luke 8:23 **and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. NRSV**

The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. It is on the middle of a great trough descending from Mt. Hermon which rises to over 9000 feet just 35 miles away to the north. On the east of the Sea the mountains rise 2000 feet above it and on the west to 1000 feet above it. As a consequence, when the conditions are right it can act like a wind tunnel with tremendous winds and waves.



Hills Rising above the Sea of Galilee

Mark 4:38 **Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher,¹⁷ don’t you care if we drown?”**

Matthew 8:25 **The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord,¹⁸ save us! We’re going to drown!”**

Luke 8:24a **The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master,¹⁹ we’re going to drown!”**

¹⁷ *The Greek word διδάσκαλος {dē-dä'-skä-los} again.*

¹⁸ *The Greek word κύριος {kü'-rē-os} here can be translated “Lord” or “Master.” Obviously, the words the Lord originally spoke were in Aramaic. These are all translations into the Greek, and all are appropriate.*

Remember, Jesus said that those who lived along the Sea could usually tell when a storm was coming. Perhaps the disciples had expressed concern when they suddenly departed. At any rate, from Mark's account it seems they were blaming Jesus for getting them into this mess and were alarmed that He didn't seem to be concerned. After all, most of them were fishermen and knew when they were in trouble. He was just a landsman, a carpenter from Nazareth.

In the three different Gospels there are three different titles in the Greek by which Jesus was addressed, Teacher, Lord, and Master, all of which are related in meaning. It is possible that this was because there were three different titles by which the disciples crowding around Him addressed Him. We should also remember that they wouldn't have addressed Jesus in Greek, but in their own language of Aramaic. So the difference may also be due to the translation choices made by the writers of the Gospels. All three words are apt in describing Jesus.

Mark 4:39-40 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Matthew 8:26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Luke 8:24b-25a He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples.

When Jesus got up He expressed His surprise at their fear after all the miracles they had seen, which included raising a young man from the dead. He asked them why they were afraid. It is a question that Christians should ask themselves when they find themselves afraid of the future or even of death. With no fanfare at all, He simple said “Quiet! Be still!”

Of course, the other boats with the other disciples in them were similarly saved.

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

¹⁹ The Greek word here is ἐπιστάτης {e-pē-stä'-tās} which can be translated “master,” “chief,” or “overseer.”



Mt. Hermon 35 miles to the North of the Sea of Galilee

Matthew 8:27 **The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”**

Luke 8:25b **In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”**

As I read the Gospels, it seems clear that this miracle stunned His disciples (most of them fishermen) more than any other. Perhaps it was because healing and raising from the dead takes place in a small place (one person’s body). This miracle took place over the entire Sea of Galilee at once to both the wind and the waves (an area of 64 square miles). Also, from the scriptures the Jews believed that only God had power over the winds and the seas:

Psalm 89:8,9 “O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.”

Perhaps from this miracle they were beginning to realize what it meant when it had been prophesied that Jesus was actually the Son of Almighty God.

The Demon Possessed Man from Gadara

We know that Jesus had left the audience gathered on the west side of the lake to sail through a storm. The question is: Why had He gone and who was He going to see on the other side of the lake?

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the ~~Gerasenes~~ Gadarenes.

Luke 8:26 They sailed to the region of the ~~Gerasenes~~ Gadarenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

Matthew 8:28a When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes,

Here again we have a problem with the fact that the NIV chose to use the clearly flawed Codex Sinaiticus which was discovered in the 19th Century at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. The Textus Receptus refers to "Gadara" in all three Gospels, while the Codex Sinaiticus had "Gerasa" in Mark and Luke and "Gadara" in Matthew. The Syriac Bibles used by the ancient Syriac Tradition ²⁰ also had "Gadara" in all three texts. Gadara was listed as one of the ten cities of the Decapolis (the Roman province east of the Sea of Galilee) by the Roman historian Pliny. There is no record of a "Gerasa."

Mark 5:2-6 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.²¹ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

Luke 8:27-29 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

²⁰ *Syriac Christianity has a history going back to the 1st century A.D.. The language of the Syriac Bible was Syriac Aramaic, is a dialect of Middle Aramaic that was once spoken across much of the Fertile Crescent and Eastern Arabia*

²¹ *Evidently demon possession can bring unnatural physical strength.*

To the Jewish mind this man would have seemed an unlikely target of grace. First, he was a Gentile from a Gentile town in a Gentile territory. Second, he was demon possessed, and he wasn't brought to Jesus to be healed by a Jewish relative. Third, he had been living in tombs which made him ritually unclean. Fourth, he was living in the midst of herds of pigs which were also ritually unclean. Fifth, he was considered dangerous and an outcast even by the Gentiles who had kept him imprisoned for years.

As we read the story, we can see a struggle between this man's self-consciousness and the demons who were trying to control him.

You will notice that this story about the Gentile was only developed in the Gospel of Mark, originally written to the Gentiles in Antioch, and in the Gospel of Luke who was also a Gentile writing to Gentiles. The reason is clear.

Matthew 8:28b-29 **two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"**

Matthew's account on the other hand doesn't develop the story of the one Gentile who was saved, but just told about the casting out of the demons.



The Probable Landing Place after the Storm is marked by a Triangle

Mark 5:7-13 **He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.**

Luke 8:30-33 **Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.**

The demons who must have been brought rather unwillingly to the feet of Jesus understood His authority and that they were about to be cast out. They had one request, which was that they might not be cast into the Abyss which they described as “torture” or “torments.”²² There were so many of them that they were called legion. There might have been two thousand as that was the number of pigs they then possessed.

The Abyss

I feel I have to divert here to discuss the “Abyss” mentioned in Luke. It is a place where some fallen angels are confined. It was most likely inhabited mainly by those fallen angels who sinned by having relations with women before the flood as described in Genesis 6. They are also mentioned in Jude 1, and 1 Peter 3:

Genesis 6:1 “When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God ²³ saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of

²² *It is the same Greek word used to describe the sufferings of the rich man in Hell in Luke 16:23.*

²³ *The Hebrew word used here is [בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים] {beni ha Elohim}, or “sons of God.” This is the same expression used in that other ancient book, Job. In Job 1:6 “One day the angels (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) {beni ha Elohim} came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.”*

In Josephus’ Antiquities, he recorded that this was the consistent interpretation of this passage in ancient times. “For many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their

them they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim²⁴ were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them.²⁵ They were the heroes of old, men of renown.²⁶

1 Peter 3:18b-20a “He (*Jesus*) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison²⁷ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

Jude 1:6 “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”

The inhabitants of the Abyss will be released at the beginning of the Tribulation as revealed in Revelation 9.

Revelation 9:1-11 “The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ----- They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

That concludes my discussion of the Abyss.

own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants.” Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 3, Pp. 1.

²⁴ *The Hebrew word here נְפִלִים {nef-eel'-eem} is derived from the Hebrew verb נָפַל {nä·fal'} which means “to fall.” In this verse, it could refer to the “sons of God” who were “fallen angels” (who according to Jude 1:6 “forsook their first estate.”), or the super race who were descended from them. In the only other occurrence of the word, in Numbers 13:33 it is associated with a corrupt race of giants which inhabited the promised land and were driven out by the LORD (Goliath was a descendant of these).*

²⁵ *These children were evidently half man and half angel.*

²⁶ *It could be argued that these people were the real basis for some of the myths of the Ancient world such as the story of Hercules in Greek mythology. Hercules was the son of Zeus and a human mother.*

²⁷ *It has been suggested that here Jesus was proclaiming his victory to the imprisoned fallen angels in the Abyss, and the consequent reason why He was entitled to lead out of Hell His people, the Old Testament Saints who were living in the part of Hell known as Paradise.*

The Gospel Account Resumed

Matthew 8:30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.

Though Matthew didn’t mention the Gentile that was saved, he gave the same account of the destruction of the pigs. We are left to our own devices to figure out if it was the demons who drove the pigs into the water to create trouble for Jesus with their Gentile owners, or whether it was God that drove them into the water to deprive them of a residence.

Mark 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.²⁸

Luke 8:34-35a When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Matthew 8:33-34a Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus.

Matthew did report the reaction of the town.

Mark 5:15-16 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

Luke 8:35b-36 When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

As we have already seen, Gadara was the town referred to here. It was about five or six miles away from the closest part of the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee, so a round trip would have taken at least four hours if everybody had done it at a trot. See the picture on the next page. I expect it was at least one day before the Gadarenes showed up at the scene on the lake. In the meantime, the formerly demon possessed man had sat at Jesus’ feet soaking in the Gospel of Peace.

²⁸ *The fact that they raised pigs demonstrates clearly (as Josephus backs up) that these people of the Decapolis were not Jewish, but Gentiles.*

Mark 5:17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Luke 8:37 Then all the people of the region of the *Gerasenes Gadarenes* asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

Matthew 8:34b And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

You will notice that the people did not demand that Jesus leave. They pleaded with Him because they believed the report of the pig herders and were afraid. At that time, they knew of no reason that the Jewish Messiah had anything for them. Little did they know that they were about to get their first Gentile evangelist.



Looking Down on the Sea of Galilee from Ancient Gadara

Mark 5:18-20 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Luke 8:38-39 **The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.**

The man from Gadara was a Gentile who was redeemed from many curses. The Gospels of Mark and Luke were written primarily for a Gentile audience, so their account focused on the Gentile who was saved. Matthew was written primarily to prove that Jesus was the Messiah and King of the Jews, so his account only focused on Jesus’ authority and power over the demons. Only Matthew mentioned a second man. He did not mention the response of either man to the teaching of Jesus.

This story of the first Gentile evangelist ²⁹ is one of my favorite stories of God’s grace. When the story opened Jesus was on the Jewish side of the lake speaking to thousands of people. Then, suddenly, He crossed the lake in the middle of a storm to land in Gentile territory to speak to one willing heart, a Gentile, demon possessed, living in the unclean tombs, among unclean animals. From the Jewish point of view, he was the most unmerited object of grace imaginable. Jesus cast the demons out and taught that man who sat at His feet for at least a day. What a demonstration of the value that God places on every single soul!

For me, this story is the best example in the Gospels of what Jesus was talking about when He told the parable of the ninety and nine sheep where the shepherd left the flock to find just one lost sheep.

More on the Decapolis

From the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible:

The Decapolis, as its name implies (Gr. deka: “ten,” polis: “city”), was, in New Testament times, the area of the ten towns. Its original meaning may have been political rather than geographical, signifying the league of ten towns that probably took shape in the period between Herod’s domination of the area and Rome’s stabilization of the eastern frontier in the early days of imperial rule. The area east of the Jordan and Galilee, where nine of the ten allied communities were located, was exposed to the open and unpacified desert, and a military alliance was sound policy for a group of predominantly Greek cities which, in characteristic Greek fashion, set some value on autonomy and political independence.

The complex of Greek communities in eastern Palestine was a phenomenon of the Hellenistic diaspora, that deep penetration of the whole of the eastern Mediterranean by Greek immigrants that followed the conquests of Alexander the Great. Two of the ten Decapolis towns, Pella and

²⁹ *I like to believe that that the man that John and the disciples ran into in the Decapolis the next year (Mark 9:38-40) who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name was either this man (who would have looked quite different) or one of his converts.*

Dion, both Macedonian names, were probably founded by Alexander's own veterans in the mid-4th century.

A tradition of free government was established by the Greek immigrants, and though the cities lost such autonomy in the days of Maccabean domination (110-64 BC), Pompey recognized the spirit of the territory when he established Roman control in 64-63 B.C. In the words of Josephus, he "restored the cities to their citizens." Such freedom meant that the cities of the area elected their own councils, possessed the privileges of coinage and asylum, the right of property and administration in adjacent territory, and the right of association for defense and commerce. The area was nevertheless under the overall control of the governor of the province of Syria in Antioch.