

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospel Lesson 20

Miracles over Disease, Devils, and the Deep Blue Sea

Matthew 8 part 2

Synopsis of the Life of Christ Timeline

Wilmington's Guide to The Bible has an excellent section entitled "Jesus' Seventy-Two Steps from Glory to Glory" in which he arranges the scriptural accounts of the life of Jesus chronologically as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark, and Luke, into 72 "steps." Step one was from Heaven to Earth at His birth. Step 72 is Jesus' ascension to Heaven. Though each of the first three gospels is for the most part, individually chronological, no one gospel contains all the recorded events of Jesus' life. Wilmington's compilation of the sequence of the events in the ministry of Jesus is a concise masterpiece and an essential tool for any serious student of the life of Jesus. These "steps" are geographically grouped ministry teachings and events as listed in the attached appendix of this lesson. Matthew chapter 8 is step 20 in his chronology – labeled "From Nazareth to Capernaum. Wilmington also tabulates the number of sermons, parables, etc... He tabulates the miracle of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law as the fourth miracle since Jesus turned water into wine at Cana.

Peter's Mother-in-law

How did Peter end up living in Capernaum? Marriage. Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Phillip were from Bethsaida (John 1:44) near the mouth of the Jordan River about a mile and a half north of Capernaum. The fish market was in Magdala, south of Capernaum and he was there on a regular basis. One can only conjecture Peter catching a glimpse of her at the Magdala market, or at a stop-over in Capernaum and the "rest is history" as they say. Jesus had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum and based his ministry from there. It stands to reason that since Peter, James, and John had left their family fishing business Peter would have found a new home with his bride and her mother. Possibly his father-in-law had died, and the house passed to the daughter making Peter the head and owner of the house caring for His widowed mother-in-law, or he purchased it and hosted her. "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house" (Matthew 8:14).

Archaeological evidence for his house

"Located between the synagogue and the lake shore, it was found near the front of a labyrinth of houses from many different periods. It is believed to be the house of Peter the fisherman as early as the mid-1st century, with two churches having been constructed over it.^[18] Beginning in the latter half of the 1st century AD, this house displayed markedly different characteristics than the other excavated houses. The rough walls of the main room were reworked with care and plastered. Furthermore, almost no domestic ceramics are recovered, but lamps and large storage jars abound. This suggests that the house was no longer used as a residence but a communal gathering place.^[23] One explanation suggested for this treatment is that the room was venerated as a religious gathering place, a *domus ecclesiae* or house church, for the Christian community.^[18] There is a 5th-century Byzantine church which consists of a central octagon placed directly on top of the walls of St. Peter's house with the aim of preserving its exact location of what they venerated as Peter's house."ⁱ

Proximity

Luke 4:31-48 Indicates that Jesus taught in the Capernaum synagogue and arose and went into Simon's house. Only when you stand in the Capernaum synagogue doorway and look at the foundation of Peter's house about a hundred feet away does the proximity impact you. The mother-in-law could have heard the singing from the synagogue from her open window. The recorded life of Jesus is documentable and provable in real lives in real places in real-time.

Power and Compassion

Sadly, the fact that the healed woman immediately got up and “ministered to them” is disdained by modern feminism as male chauvinism. Let's go back to that same period to better understand the mentality. Luke 4:38 says “they besought him for her.” They were waiting outside till the service dismissed to alert Jesus. Jesus went immediately though no doubt thronged by many with questions and requests for healing. These texts record, “He saw her,” “He stood over her,” and “He touched her.” She served unsolicited. No doubt her daughter had made preparations and was ready to care for their needs and she simply got up and helped. It was her pleasure.

The Word Spread

By the evening many brought relatives that were possessed with devils to Jesus. This Galilee of the Gentiles was labeled as a borderland of pagan spiritual darkness. “And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” . . . “in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Mt. 4:16) Jesus announced in his first and last sermon in Nazareth that these were the ones he came to reach. He promised to “preach deliverance” and to actually “set at liberty” captive souls (Isaiah 61:10). Only Jesus truly cared for the demon-possessed and had the power to deliver them.

Mass Miracle

And he healed “all that were sick.” Harold Wilmington tabulates this mass healing as miracle # 6. Matthew notes this as a partial fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4 “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Yet Matthew 8 reads, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” Why doesn't the quote match up exactly? Primarily because Jesus may have been speaking in Aramaic, quoting from either the Hebrew or from the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew. Also, sentence syntax/order varies between languages. Matthew also records that Jesus left out the rest of the phrase “by His stripes we were healed.” In His first sermon, Jesus also left out part of a verse “the Day of the Vengeance of our God,” because He was not ready to fulfill that portion. Peter later quoted the rest of the portion of Isaiah 53: 4 as referring not to physical but rather spiritual healing “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:24,25). Letting scripture interpret scripture we can conclude that “Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses” deals with Jesus personally physically healing “all that were sick,” and that “by whose stripes ye were healed” deals with spiritual healing/salvation. To make the leap that all who believe in Jesus' stripes for their salvation are guaranteed healing from all diseases has no scriptural warrant. James commands us to pray for God's healing of the sick and prescribes how the elders are to administer this request from the sick (James 5:13-18). God is still in the healing business. Charlatans are in the business of promising healing to all who believe in all situations, every time and then use fear and blame for the Christian who is not healed as a faith failure on their part. If they really believe that then why don't they prove it and just go to the hospital and do what Jesus did? Heal them all. By their own definition they are weak in faith. Even worse, they are misinterpreting scripture and making claims that God does not make. Watch out for the fangs inside the furry fleece of the wolves wearing sheep's clothing. In Matthew 7:15-23 Jesus had just warned about these false prophets who misquote Him and then guilt trip the sick. Jesus came, saw, touched, and healed. We should come, see, touch, and pray and leave the healing and the credit all to Jesus.

Jesus attempts to leave the thronging needy crowds but is detained Matthew 8:18-22

When Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave the order to depart by boat to the other side (8:18). This contrasts with Matthew 9:36 "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." We cannot assume that he had no compassion one time but did later. What we can know from the trip across the lake is that he purposefully did not want to miss the opportunity to be in the storm in the middle of the lake with these disciples to strengthen their faith as well as establish his deity by displaying his power over nature. From verses 28-34, we see that He had a divine appointment with the demoniacs of Gergesenes/Gadarenes. It's important in our self-centered faith to remember that our timing must align with his divine timing, which includes others. He returned and ministered in Capernaum, but that city did not have a monopoly on him. Neither do we.

I'll follow you but...

In Matthew 8:18 a would-be disciple, a scribe, made this profession of commitment. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus was not impressed but gave him a fair warning. Just as verse 18 opened with "Jesus saw great multitudes," so verse 19 could have read "a scribe saw great multitudes." Did he want to get on the wagon at the head of the parade? Jesus made no promises of benefits or provisions. In fact, he said, you probably won't have a place to sleep. There was no reply. Another committed to follow Jesus after his father's death. Jesus said to leave that up to the dead or workers in death. The implication was, if you won't follow me now, you won't follow me later. Again, there was no reply. Discipleship means forsaking all to follow Him or a surrendered willingness to leave all. When verse 23 says that His disciples got in the boat with him, those two men were not included.

Into the storm with Him (8:23-27)

"There arose a great tempest." It's one thing to fall asleep and then awake to a storm, even another to sleep through a storm, but it's another matter to know the storm is coming and to choose to go out in a boat just to be in the middle of it and then be at such peace that you can sleep like a baby with not a care in the world. If we know a storm is coming, we take shelter or try to avoid it. They had no clue. He did. I know he was asleep, but I wondered before they came and shook him, was He awake with His eyes closed just waiting for them to come and plead for help? It says they came and woke him. They gave Him a wake-up call that He didn't even request. He knew their alarm would sound right on time. Have you ever had one of those calls in the middle of the night? "Save us we perish." He didn't say don't worry. He rebuked their fear and their lack of faith. Fear says *what if?* Faith says *even if*. "He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm." Before a great tempest can be turned into a great calm we must pray to a great Savior. Their response from fear of perishing was not about nature around them but about, his nature - What kind of Man is he? If the winds and waves obey him, then he is no natural man but supernatural.

The Country of the Gergesenes (8:28) - Gadarenes (Mark 5:1-4)

Where?: **Gergasa** (Γέργεσσα in Byzantine greek) *Gergesenes* means "those who come from pilgrimage or fight."^[3] Both Gerasa and Gadara were cities to the east of the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan. They were both Gentile cities filled with citizens who were culturally more Greek. Gadara was one of the ten Decapolis cities on the eastern side of the Jordan Valley.

Kursi – referred to by one tour guide as *Where Pigs fly* (8:30-34) Kursi is the archaeological "tell" or hill of ruins that marks the traditional location of this miracle. It is seven to eight miles across from Magdala on the eastern shore of Galilee. "Kursi comes from the Aramaic word for "chair", and later as Kursi, a word with the same meaning in Arabic. The monks built a walled monastic complex there and made it a

destination for Christian pilgrims. That monastery was destroyed by Sassanid Persian armies in 614 CE, partially rebuilt, and finally leveled by the 749 Galilee earthquake. The remains of the monastery can be visited in the Kursi National Park. Christian artifacts from Kursi can be viewed at the Golan Archaeological Museum.”ⁱⁱ

Who? Was there one or two men? Mark and Luke emphasize the prominent one, but Matthew clearly identifies two men. They were possessed by devils. One was exceeding fierce. “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him” (Mark 5:4). He was “living amongst the tombs, and crying out “Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Luke adds “When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.” (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him” (Luke 8:28-30).

What happened? (8:28-34)

- Jesus cast the legion of demons out of these two men.
- Jesus cast a legion of demons out of one.
- The demons pleaded to be cast into the swine (2000 swine Mark 5:13)
- The swine ran violently into the sea
- The population heard and came out and “besought him to depart.”
- One of the men asked to go with Jesus. Mark 5:18-20
- Jesus denied him and asked him to tell his friends what the Lord and done for him
- He “began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all *men* did marvel”

Jesus demonstrated he was no respecter of persons and healed a servant of a Roman centurion. He responded eagerly to the faith of this gentile Roman and taught that anyone, even those not of the seed of Abraham would sit and eat in his kingdom while many of those born of Abraham would be cast out. He compassionately touched and healed a leper. Jesus demonstrated his power over disease individually and over a mass of sick folks. He demonstrated His power over the wind and waves. He demonstrated his power over a legion of demons. This was all in the first year of his ministry and He was just getting started. By chapter 9 we see “multitudes” marveling “that God had given such power unto men.”

¹Capernaum – Wikipedia

²Gergesa- Wikipedia