

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Tradition or Commandments Matthew 15

Ministry of Jesus Timeline

According to Harold Willimington's Guide to the Bible - "His Seventy-Two

Steps from Glory To Glory" the timeline of chapter 14 covers

#36 – From the Plain of Gennesaret to Capernaum (Matthew 15:1-20;

Mark 7:1-23; John 6:22-71;7:1)

#37 – From Capernaum to Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21- 28;

Mark 7:24-30)

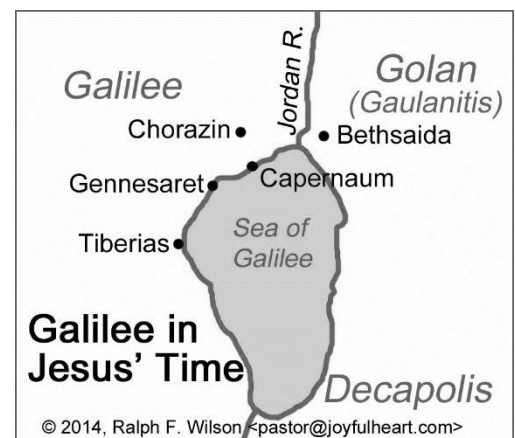
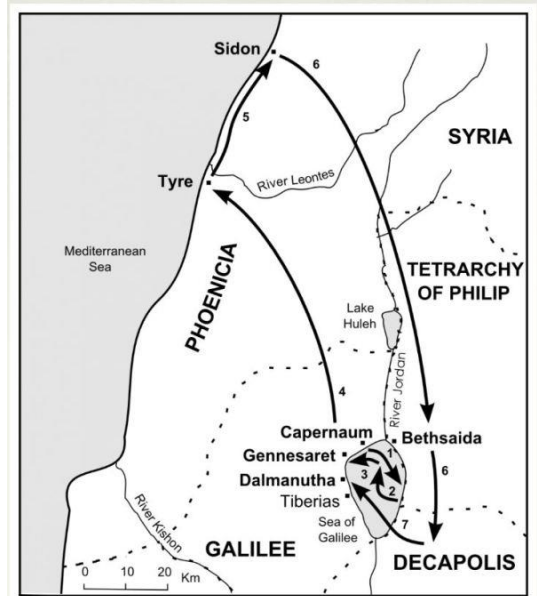
#38 – From Tyre and Sidon to the Decapolis (Mark 7:31-37)

This chapter includes an unexplained venture into Gentile territories of the ancient Phoenicians, which is in modern-day Lebanon. Then Mark records that from there he journeys to the gentile region southeast of Galilee. Between those two ventures, He Teaches in Capernaum and again after returning from the Decapolis.

From the Synagogue of Magdala on the south side of the plain of Gennesaret (*Gena Saret*) to Capernaum (*Kafer Naum*) is about 3 miles. The ruins of the Synagogue of Magdala and the Synagogue of Capernaum are excavated and well-preserved. The one in Capernaum visible today was built three centuries after Jesus but clearly upon the foundations of one dating back to his time. The foundations of the Magdala synagogue are clearly visible, including the mosaic tile floor as well as the pulpit stone with Jewish symbols. Archaeologists have labeled this site as A++ being proven to be from Jesus' time. Since Jesus preached in all the Synagogues of Galilee He would have preached in both multiple times and likely at the same pulpit stone on display there now.

Apparently, the feeding of the 5000+ in chapter 14 on the other side of the lake had been the topic of synagogue debate among the Pharisee Rabbis. Before he left the Magdala, Gennesaret area they questioned Him about His disciples eating with unwashed hands. They were concerned that He was breaking with the "traditions of the elders" and influencing thousands of followers to ignore those traditions. Did all those people wash their hands? What was the tradition of hand washing? This was first a biblical custom based on the commandment for the Priests and Levites in the Tabernacle.

"Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal*: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed throughout their generations." (Exodus 30:18-21)



Apparently, hand washing was carried out by the Prophets as well. Elisha was Elijah's disciple and washed his hands.

2 Kings 3:11 "But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah."

Jesus washed his disciples' feet instead of the other way around to teach the greatness in serving. Did John the Baptist's disciples pour water on his hands or wash his feet? Possibly since it was the custom of prophets.

The Magdal Synagogue is right beside a huge fish market with freshwater live wells channeled a thousand feet from the Galilee shoreline. If you bought fish at that market, it was not only fresh it was handled by Kosher traditions. The Rabbi right next door kept an eye on things. At the ruins of the Magdala fish market were found hundreds of coins from Jerusalem. The salted fish trade was a going concern as far as Jerusalem. There were Pharisees from Jerusalem present possibly to oversee the fish trade and delivery to the Temple markets. They would have had to examine the kosher standards and approve the sale and could have been consulted by the Magdala Rabbi as to this new teacher not requiring traditional hand washing. (15:1) It was rumored that Jesus was not keeping a close enough eye on His disciples to make sure they washed their hands according to the elders' traditions.



(15:1-2) Was the bread and fish He served prepared in kosher fashion? He didn't buy it from their market. Where did He buy it from? None of the fishermen or buyers or market owners around the north rim had sold Him the fish to feed 5000+. This was the big mystery in the fish markets. I don't doubt they had investigated as to the source. Somebody would have made a lot of money in that sale. Magdala may have been the only market big enough to handle such a quantity and even that is doubtful. What about the vessels that held the food? Were they cleaned properly? There were no Rabbis consulted about this. Jesus mentioned their regulations over cleanliness. Jesus answered their "why don't you?" with a "why don't *you*?" of His own. Matthew 15:3 "But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? "Furthermore, on top of that, He asked a Why do you... "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do" (Mark 7:8)

Jesus quoted the 5th commandment which if violated carried the death penalty (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16).

For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:10-13).

Korban means *gift*. All one had to do to evade one's duty to father or mother was to say *korban* implying it has already been set aside as a gift to God. Saying "I can't help" to a parent by saying "I owe it to God," was rebuked as not only hypocritical but breaking a law of God (15:7-9). "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" Isaiah 29:13.

Jesus gave a brief parable or example to the multitudes (15:10-11). It was in direct contradiction to the kosher traditions made by their rabbis.

“And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. “ (15:10-11)

The disciples asked for an explanation. He replied (15:15-20). Jesus made the point that internal righteousness in the heart was what God desired not external rule-keeping or in this case rule avoidance. This greatly offended the Pharisees. (15:12)

“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (15:12-14).

- Jesus did not seek acceptance from men, but only from His Father and His Father's Word.
- Jesus didn't try to be non-offensive when it came to truth and error.
- Jesus gave no room to hypocrisy nor did His heavenly Father (Isa 1:11 -18)

Jesus and the Canaanite woman

- She requested that He cast the demon out of her daughter. (15:22)
- He ignored her. (15:23)
- The disciples asked if they should dispatch her. (15:24)
- Jesus said He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (15: 24;10:6)
- The woman makes her desperate appeal and a heart touching argument. (15:25-27)
- Jesus remarked at her great faith and granted her request. (15:28)
- Mark 7:30 “And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.”

Jesus goes to Decapolis and heals the deaf and dumb (Mark 7:31-37)

Jesus returns to the northwest shore again and heals many verifying that He is the Messiah. (15:29-31)

Thousands of people had eaten bread miraculously provided through His hand on the other side of the lake. The crowds were arriving by boat (John 6:23-25) Jesus challenged their motive of following Him only for the loaves and fish (John 6:26,27).

The Pharisees challenged Him for more signs.

“They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?” (John 6:30)

The rabbis wanted to see with their own eyes what they heard He did on the other side of the lake. Then they challenged Jesus to do something as great or greater than sending manna from Heaven.

It is after this exchange that Jesus gave His sermon on the Bread of Life in the Synagogue of Capernaum (John 6:24,59).

It seems that the timing of feeding the 4000 comes after that sermon on a hillside around Capernaum. This gives them a sign. (Matthew 15:32-39; John 6:31-58).

He then said they must receive Him like their fathers did the manna. His literal words of “eating my flesh and drinking my blood,” (John 6:56) were too strong for the loaves and fish eaters. (John 6:66)

Jesus asked if the 12 would leave also. Peter made a great confession of faith in Jesus alone. (John 6:68,69)