

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Signs, Sadducees and the Son of God

Matthew 15:29-16:20 Lesson 31

Ministry of Jesus Timeline

According to Harold Willimington's Guide to the Bible in the section "His Seventy-Two Steps from Glory To Glory" the timeline of Jesus' ministry, Matthew chapter 15-16 covers steps ...

#39 From Decapolis to Mt. Tabor (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9)

#40 Mt. Tabor – Magdala (Matthew 15:39-16:12; Mark 8:9-21)

Tabor is the traditional sight of the Mount of Transfiguration

Steps #41- 43 events are not recorded in Matthew but are in (Mark 8:22-26; John 7:2-9)

#41 From Magdala to Bethsaida

Jesus heals the blind man (twice, 1st mud-unclear-2nd clear)

#42 From Bethsaida to Jerusalem (John 7:10-10:39)

Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem

He forgives the adulterous woman. He preaches 9th sermon

He escapes the plot to stone Him He heals a blind man who is summoned before the council of Pharisees

He preaches His 10th sermon on the good shepherd. He predicts His death. He escapes again.

#43 From Jerusalem to Perea (John 10:40-42)

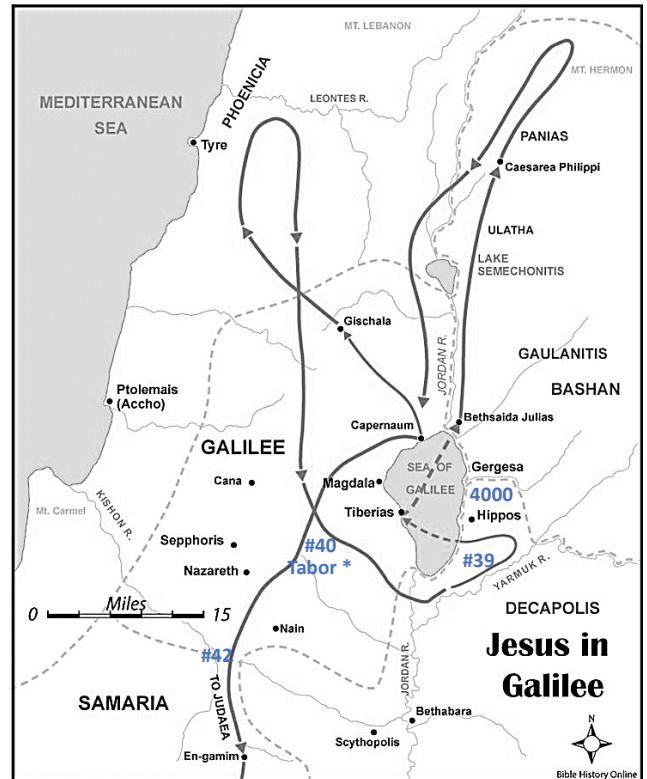
#39 For three days Jesus heals diseases (Matthew 15:29-31)

He went up into a mountain and the multitudes came. Again he healed the dumb, maimed, lame, and blind which are the prophesied Messianic miracles (Isaiah 35:6; 42:7). The multitudes were amazed at His miracles. They glorified the God of Israel (15:31).

Jesus Feeds 4000+ on a mountainside at the Sea of Galilee (15:32-38) Galilee is minus 700' sea level surrounded by mountains. There are only three sea-level plains on the Galilee.

- North end between Capernaum and Bethsaida.
- The plane of the Gergesenes at Magdala.
- The exit of the Jordan at the south end. (15:39) He took a boat over from the mountain slopes near Gergasa to the coast of Magdala which places the feeding of the 4000 on the eastern slopes. (Matthew 15:32-39)

See the article by Dr. Thomas S. McCall on the location of this miracle. He places it at the border of Decapolis near Gergasa/ Hippos only a few miles south of Bethsaida where Jesus fed the 5000. Revisionist theologians assert that he fed 4000 Gentiles in the Decapolis based on the statement that they glorified the God of Israel indicating they were not Jews. The Bible is full of Jews glorifying God. They assert that a large number of Gentiles were believers in Jesus before He



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died. Dr. McCall's article successfully proves from the Greek word in the text that Jesus was at the border of Decapolis. The Gospel of Mark 7:31 reads "And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis." We shouldn't get our theology from the latest Jesus Television film series. The Chosen, Season 3, episode 7 presents this revisionist narrative of Gentile believers in Decapolis who are saved on the mission trip of the 70. Jesus forbade the 70 from going to any town or village but the "house of Israel" (10:6; 15:24). The film goes on to portray a Gentile uprising which is a fictional theatrical fabrication. While I recognized this as such, my first impression was confused as to the meaning of "midst of the coasts of Decapolis" portrayed as being a Gentile venture. It didn't pass the smell test.

"midst" as the border (οριον or orion) of Decapolis. That is, He was near the Decapolis border close to the Sea of Galilee. Much hinges on the translation of the Greek term οριον, orion. Some try to translate it broadly as referring to a "region or district." However, one of the standards in Greek translation is A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, by G. Abbott-Smith. This manual has the following entry on the word on page 323: "οριον, -ου, το (< ορος, a boundary), [in LXX chiefly for גבול;] a boundary, bound; chiefly in pl., and so always in NT." Thus, the word is derived from *oros*, which means "mountain," a frequent boundary between geographical regions. It refers to a limit, a boundary or border of an area. Some try to make this mean that Jesus went into the heart of Decapolis, but what the word indicates is that He came to the border of Decapolis, not into the region.¹

This revisionism revises the Gospel to the Jew and makes it all about the Gentile church. Dr. McCall rightly contends "If Jesus had already had a broad ministry among Gentiles in Decapolis and other areas, why were the Apostles surprised by what happened in Acts 15?" He concludes "Some revisionist commentators have an agenda to show that Jesus had a massive outreach among Gentiles in His earthly ministry." If they can establish this, it will help them demolish the dispensational distinctions that exist before and after the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Their purpose is to show that Church Age concepts and the broad inclusion of Gentiles were something already instituted in the ministry of Christ before the cross. "They also want to show that Jesus actually preferred ministry among the Gentiles in contrast with the difficulties He was having among the Jewish people. There is an undercurrent of anti-Jewish attitude in all of these commentaries and revisionist textbooks." Classic Calvinistic, Reformed, and Covenant theologies at best blur the lines and at worst erase the dispensational distinctions between Israel and the Church thus misinterpreting Jesus' teachings to the Jews regarding the Gospel of the literal Kingdom offer as well as misinterpreting the Mystery form of the Kingdom.

This effectively fits their replacement theology of no difference between Israel and the church. They purport that the Kingdom of God is one sovereign entity through all times made up of "the people of God." This fits their theology that the Jewish people were not exclusively the People of God and that the nation had but no longer has a chosen status. They believe that we gentiles of faith in the Church are a replacement of Israel. Geographical references such as "the midst of the coasts of Decapolis" when translated and interpreted by clear exegesis of the text creates a problem for wrong theology rather than a proof thereof.

Did the light of the Gospel go to the Gentiles? Eventually, yes."Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke 2:31,32) This border between Jew and Gentile

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Regions, between those to whom the light was given and those who sit in pagan darkness may be the area that Luke was referring to in the word “shadow” “To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). If Jesus told His disciples not to hide their light under a bushel, then why would He? Jesus did great miracles as a shining light in proximity to the borderland into the Gentile Decapolis. He limited the Gospel of the literal kingdom to Israel while doing miracles right on the border (Gk – *Orion*) of the Gentile territory. “And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders - (Gk *Orion*) of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matthew 4:13)

“They that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.” (15:38)

“straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.” (Mark 8:8-10)

Commentators consistently refer to it as an unidentified town on the west side of the lake near Magdala.

#40 (cont.) Mt. Tabor – Magdala (Matthew 15:39-16:12; Mark 8:9-21)

The Tempting by the Authorities (16:1-4)

This was the first time these two groups cooperated to test Jesus. Having heard of the miracles on the east side of the lake they asked for a “sign from heaven” as the Pharisees did last time requesting a “sign from thee.”

His rebuke, “O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times?” (16:3) He gives them a shortened version of the sign of Jonah than He gave to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:39. Resurrection is the sign as we went into detail about in Lesson 27. The focus of Jesus for using the sign of Jonah to this generation of Jewish leaders was the sign of resurrection. In other words, the only sign left after the Pharisees had rejected all His signs would be His resurrection. Jesus later resurrected Lazarus (John 12:17). Then He Himself would rise from the grave. Paul made it clear that the entire credibility of Jesus rests on His resurrection. “declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Romans 1:4).

The leaven of the Pharisees (16:6, 12)

Jesus' warning of leaven was immediately perceived as a hint that He was hungry for bread (16:7-10). He rebuked them for lack of faith by overlooking that He had just fed 5000 & 4000. Jesus interprets the leaven as the doctrine of the Pharisees. In chapter 15 Jesus said they were “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” which makes “the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” In that exchange, the disciples expressed concern that He offended them and He replied. “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

Those insisting upon keeping the “tradition of the elders,” aren’t going to be too happy about it when it is pointed out that the tradition of men has nullified the commandment of God and become the ultimate superior doctrinal truth. Neither did they like it when Jesus pointed out how they were transgressors of the 5th commandment (15:3). Remember that Jesus had just escaped two attempts by their cohorts, to stone Him in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2,32,44). The “leaven” is the influence of the elders who maintain the “traditions of the fathers” and try to be spiritual by gaining their approval.

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Paul writes to the Church at Colosse.

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Colossians 2:20-23). Worshiping in spirit and in truth is not the same as “will worship” via traditions.

His reply to their hand wringing over hand washing in chapter 15 is spelled out in Mark’s Gospel.

“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).

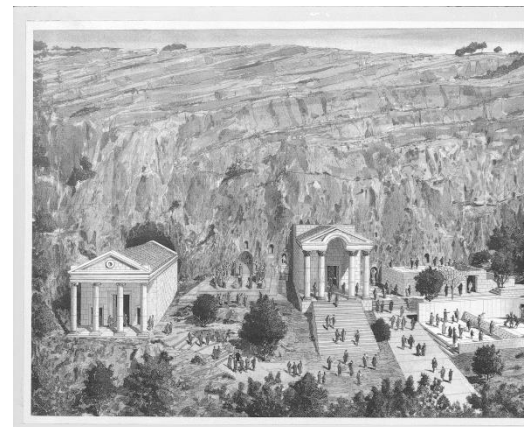
#44 From Perea to Caesarea Phillipi (Matthew 16: 13-28; Mark 8:27-9:1; Luke 9:18-27)

Strong’s Concordance “Coasts” Gk – *meros* - a *section* or *allotment*; a *division* Caesarea Philippi is used of the parts, or section of a country or region.ⁱⁱ “region of Caesarea” is a 3-4 day walk from 700’ below sea level to approximately 2500’ above sea level. Jesus took them to the center of Pagan worship of the God Pan/Panias – Bania, to ask them who the people say that He is and to ask who they think He is. The rumors were that He was “one of the prophets” or John or Elijah (16:14). Peter when asked gave the famous declaration; “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said this was a divine revelation not a conclusion by human observation of Jesus’ flesh and blood miracles. This is a reaffirmation of Peter’s confession “we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” in John 6:69. Jesus’ statement “upon this rock I will build my church” was not a reference to Peter. The name Peter in the Strong’s Concordance – [from *pet’-ros* a primary word; a (piece of) *rock* (larger than G3037); as a name, *Petrus*, an apostle: - Peter, rock. Compare G2786.] Peter later clears up any debate as to whom the Church is built upon.

“Ye also, as **lively stones, are built up a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a **chief corner stone**, elect, **precious**: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe **he is precious**: but unto them which be disobedient, **the stone** which the builders disallowed, the same is made **the head of the corner**,” (1 Peter 2:5-8).

Jesus is that stone. The building of the Church by Jesus utilizes only those who make the same confession of Faith in Jesus the Son of the living God. They become “living stones” placed in the “spiritual house.”

“**The gates of Hell**” or the Temple of Satan is contrasted with the Church - Christ’s Temple. “Caesarea Philippi had been built and dedicated to Zeus. This pagan god was worshiped at a religious center built a short distance from the more ancient one in Dan—at the foot of Mount Hermon... the demonic headquarters of the Old Testament and the Greek world. We often presume that the phrase “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” describes a Church taking on the onslaught of evil. But the word “against” is not present in the Greek. Translating the phrase without it



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gives it a completely different connotation: “the gates of hell will not withstand it.” It is the Church that Jesus sees as the aggressor. He was declaring war on evil and death. Jesus would build His Church atop the gates of hell.”ⁱⁱⁱ

“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” This cannot be an exclusive gatekeeper role only to be handed down by Peter in perpetuity to the next successor because the disciples did not understand that to be the case. Shortly thereafter they were debating who was the greatest among them (Matthew 18:1;20:21). Jesus repeated the keys analogy in 16:19 and 18:18 to all the disciples. “What follows clarifies the matter. Peter held precisely the keys given to every preacher and teacher. Every believer who truly proclaims the terms of salvation in Christ uses the keys of the kingdom.”^{iv} They were instructed not to reveal His true identity as the Messiah, as the people may have tried to make Him king, which would have caused conflict with the Roman Empire.

Peter receives his greatest rebuke after his greatest confession (16:21-23). So much for the infallibility of the “first Pope.” Peter took Jesus aside privately and apparently, the rebuke was also private. Jesus’ death announcement after this great declaration was absurd to Peter. This was six months before the cross. If the gates of Hell cannot prevail against Him, then how could the Roman Empire, much less the chief priests and elders, stop Him? The disciples had to understand that their confession meant the possibility of literally bearing their cross with him. He assured them that He indeed would come as the Messiah/Christ in power and glory with His angels and reward everyone (16:27). If the disciples were not redirected from their self-preservation, they risked becoming an obstacle to God’s will, just as Peter did with his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus shifted the paradigm away from their sakes to “for My sake.”

“There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (16:28). “Some standing here” indicates more than one which could reference the three disciples who viewed His “glory” at the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-7. The “coming...with His angels...rewarding every man according to his works,” is at the end of the Tribulation at the Battle of Armageddon. Did it mean that John would live to see the vision in the Revelation of Jesus Christ coming in His Kingdom while on Patmos?

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:11-16)

It seems to be referring to the entrance into the Millennial Kingdom after the judgment of the nations.

“When the Son of man shall **come in his glory**, and **all the holy angels with him**, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:31-34)

ⁱ https://www.levitt.com/essays/feeding_4000

ⁱⁱ A Greek English Lexicon of the new Testament, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979, P 506

ⁱⁱⁱ Michael S. Heiser, What Did Jesus Mean by “Gates of Hell”? (logos.com) LOGOS, Word by Word, 2018

^{iv} Ibid P 143