

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

WEEK SIX – JESUS CHRIST’S MINISTRY AROUND GALILEE

1) The Pharisees and Sadducees demand a sign – Matthew 16:1-12

As Jesus returns to Galilee He is once again confronted by the Jewish leaders. Although this is not the last time they will meet, it is the last time Jesus will invite them to believe in Him.

- a) Under normal circumstances the Pharisees and Sadducees were at odds with each other. However, they are united in their opposition to Jesus.
- b) They could not deny the fact Jesus was doing miracles, but they refuse to believe He was enabled by God. They are challenging Jesus to do a new miracle that will prove God is enabling Him.
- c) Jesus’ response is, ‘If you had any spiritual insight you would already understand that the miracles I am doing come from God.
- d) The only sign Jesus is going to give them is the sign of Jonah – His death and resurrection. Even then, they will refuse to believe.
- e) As the 12 accompany Jesus to the other side of the lake they realize they had forgotten to bring food. They area they are sailing to is isolated and had no places to purchase food.
- f) Jesus uses the opportunity to warn them about the influence of the Pharisees (legalism) and the Sadducees (power). The 12 had been raised to respect the Pharisees (seen as devout) and Sadducees (The High Priest and other key leaders). Jesus warns the 12 neither are to be followed.

2) Peter confesses Jesus as The Christ – Matthew 16:13-20

This passage is the climax to Jesus’ teaching ministry and serves as a ‘final exam’ for the 12. It consists of only one question: “Who do you say that I am?” This exam comes after 2 ½ years of Jesus teaching, modeling and demonstrating through a variety of miracles that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

- a) In the months leading up to this moment Jesus has spent more and more time a part from the crowds and alone with the 12. Often they retreated into Gentile areas. This is where we find them in Matthew 16:13.
- b) Luke 9:18 tells us Jesus spent time praying before asking them this question.
- c) ‘Son of Man’ (vs. 13) was Jesus’ most common name used to refer to Himself and comes from Daniel 7:13. The Jews recognized it as a title for the Messiah. The name emphasized the Messiah’s humanity
- d) Jesus’ question is not intended to gain information, but to force the 12 to consider what they hear people saying about Him and what they themselves believe about His identity.
- e) Their answers reflect the opinions of those who had a positive view of Jesus and perhaps considered themselves His followers. The most common opinions:
 - **John the Baptist** – Some believe Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, returned from the grave to continue announcing the Messiah.
 - **Elijah** – Most Jews considered him the supreme prophet whom God would send just prior to Messiah’s arrival.

- **Jeremiah** – Jewish tradition held that as Jerusalem was falling to the Babylonians, Jeremiah had removed the Ark of the Covenant and Alter of Incense from the Temple and hid them in the mountains. He will return just prior to the Messiah to retrieve them and return them to the Temple.
- **One of the Prophets** – acknowledging Jesus was someone special, sent by God.

NOTE: All of these see Jesus as a forerunner of Messiah, not Messiah himself.

- f) Jesus now turns the question on the 12; ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter, speaking for all of them, answers, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’. They have much to learn about Jesus, in fact only 11 of the 12 have made this step of faith. However, for those 11, (excluding Judas) the step of accepting Jesus as Messiah has been taken.
- g) Jesus then affirms this step of faith:
- Peter’s spiritual insight came from God (1Cor. 2:12-15)
 - Jesus was going to build His church on the foundation of the Apostles (Eph.2:20) with Himself as the cornerstone. The Apostles would build on the foundation of God’s Word and the Gospel of Jesus. Peter is recognized as the leader of the 12, not of the church.
 - It is Jesus Who will build His church, not the Apostles.
 - Nothing and no one, including Satan, will defeat the Church.
 - Peter is given the ‘Keys to the Kingdom’. He will present the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 2); the Gentiles (Acts 10); and will validate the faith of the Samaritans (Acts 8).
 - The church is given the authority to discern and affirm where God is working, using Scripture as their lens.

3) Jesus foretells His death and resurrection – Matthew 16:21-23

The common belief of the Jews (including the 12) was that Messiah would establish a literal Kingdom on the earth. Jesus, however, begins to teach the 12 about His coming death and resurrection.

- a) ‘Must go...’ (vs.21) – Shows that Jesus’ death and resurrection was not optional, but was the definitive plan of God.
- b) Peter takes Jesus aside to ‘talk sense to Him’.
- ‘Rebuke’ – carries the idea of having authority to instruct. Perhaps being designated a leader got to his head.
 - ‘Far be it from you...’ – May God in His mercy spare you this...
 - ‘This shall never happen to you...’ – Peter assumes his plan is better than Jesus plan. Peter is completely contradicting Jesus.
- c) Jesus then rebukes Peter:
- ‘Get behind me Satan’ – is very similar to Jesus’ response to Satan in the Wilderness (Matt. 4:10). Peter is tempting Jesus to bypass the Cross. This temptation is very real for Jesus (Matthew 26:38-39)
 - Peter’s problem was one of perspective. He was seeing this through human eyes, not God’s.

4) Jesus' call to discipleship – Matthew 16:24-28

It is important to note these words on discipleship follow His conversation with Peter in verses 21-23. If the Messiah was going to suffer and die, then His followers were going to pay a price as well.

a) Jesus issues a 3 point call to His disciples:

- **Deny yourself** – 'Deny' means to completely disown. We are to set aside any right we have to self-determination. We set aside our own will, desires and agendas to pursue God's.
- **Take up your cross** – Full identification with Jesus Christ. We are willing to suffer loss, abuse, rejection and even death for His sake.
- **Follow me** – We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, living as He lived. This comes as we obey His Word.

b) Being willing to deny our self, take up our cross and follow Jesus results in great gain. Our salvation is worth more than anything the world can give us.

5) The Transfiguration of Jesus – Mark 9:1-13

As Jesus concludes His teaching on His upcoming death and resurrection along with our call to discipleship, He takes the 'inner three' to get a glimpse of His resurrection glory. Having acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Disciples are about to see their faith confirmed as His glory becomes visible.

a) Jesus promises that some of those currently living were going to get a preview of the Kingdom. This promise is fulfilled through the Transfiguration.

b) Six days after the promise, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up on a high mountain. As noted before, these were Jesus' most intimate friends. Jesus is following the Law which required that truth be verified by 2 or more witnesses.

c) Jesus is Transfigured (metamorphoo)- to experience a radical transformation. His glory is unveiled, becoming visible. Jesus is joined by:

- Elijah – regarded as the greatest of the prophets, whose ministry was accompanied by miracles.
- Moses – The most honored leader in Jewish history and the giver of the Law.

d) Peter, as usual, speaks out. The intent of his suggestion in building these small tabernacles (small houses) was to make this moment permanent. 'Let's just start the Kingdom here and now'. It appears Peter is still rejecting the notion that Jesus was going to die. This simply did not fit their understanding of Messiah.

e) Jesus doesn't have to rebuke Peter this time – The Father does! 'Listen to Him' includes being silent. Once again, Peter is being told to stop scheming and planning – He was to quietly listen to and obey Christ.

f) Their question in Mark 9:11 is a way of asking, 'OK, if you are not establishing your Kingdom now, then when? If you are the Messiah, then where is Elijah?' Jesus replies that John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah, but the Jews had rejected him.

6) Jesus teaches on humble, child-like faith – Matthew 18:1-6

The motive behind the Disciple's question is maneuvering for position in the Kingdom. They want to know what position they will be awarded for being faithful to Jesus. They were undoubtedly surprised by Christ's response.

- a) Children were normally excluded from gatherings of adults, to be seen but not heard. The fact Jesus places a child in their midst was highly unusual.
- b) The key to entering and serving in God's Kingdom is humility and simple faith. This is the simple faith of a child, uncluttered by pride, self-sufficiency and complex rules.

7) The parable of the lost sheep – Matthew 18:10-14

Jesus continues the theme of humility, turning to our relationship with each other.

- a) **'you do not despise one of these little ones'** – Jesus is not talking about just children, but to His children/followers. To 'despise' means to look down on someone with contempt as inferior and even worthless. We are not to look down on any follower of Jesus regardless of their station in life, struggles or differences.
- b) God so values each and every child of His that He seeks anyone who wanders away from Him and rejoices when they are 'found'. God does not want any of His children to remain alienated from Him.

8) How to respond to a fellow Believer who sins against us – Matthew 18:15-20

In earlier chapters, Jesus has spoken of 'turning the other cheek' when we are sinned against (Matthew 5:38-42). The focus there is on not retaliating against them. In Matthew 18, Jesus is talking about confronting a Believer who has sinned against you with the goal of restoration. This restoration is with you and with God. The issue is seeking their repentance. God has called us to live holy lives that reflect His holiness. (1 Peter 1:16)

- a) The first step is to talk privately with the person.
 - **Reprove** – To bring to light or to expose. Showing them their sin in a way they cannot escape seeing it.
 - If the person responds with repentance, we have gained your brother. 'Gain' means to gain something of value that was lost.
- b) If they do not respond, we are to take one or two witnesses to confirm the sin that was committed and their failure to repent. This now adds weight on them to respond and repent.
- c) If they still refuse to respond, the matter is to be taken to the church. If resistance continues, they are to be removed from the fellowship of the church until they have a change of heart and repent. The church is given the authority to make this decision.

It is essential that we remember the goal is restoration, not punishment.

9) The parable of the unforgiving servant – Matthew 18:21-35

Peter now asks if there is a limit to the number of times we need to forgive someone. Jewish tradition stated that one was required to forgive someone three times, after which forgiveness could be withheld. Jesus replies with a number and a story.

- a) The words '70 times 7' was a phrase that indicated an unlimited number. There is no limit to the number of times we are to forgive one who sins against us and repents, asking for forgiveness.
- b) Jesus then tells the story of the unforgiving servant to illustrate God's view of forgiveness.
 - The first servant owes the king 10,000 talents – the number represents an unknowable and limitless figure. One talent was equal to 20 years of wages for a laborer. After begging for more time to pay this unpayable debt, he is forgiven the whole debt by the king.

- The forgiven servant then confronts a fellow servant who owes him a debt of 100 days of wages. While this is very minor compared to the debt his creditor had owed the king, it is still a legitimate debt. When he receives the same plea he had made, the first servant refuses to forgive the debt and throws the man in jail.
- The king's response is quick and severe. The point is not whether the debt was owed, but that having been shown mercy by the king, it was expected that the servant was to pass the mercy on.
- God expects us to show forgiveness because we have been forgiven an unpayable debt through the Cross. The issue is not whether the debt is owed, but whether we are willing to forgive as we have been forgiven.

10) Jesus travels to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles – Luke 9:51-62; John 7

The feast of tabernacles was one of three feasts Jewish men were required to attend each year and took place in late September or early October. It was the most festive of the feasts, celebrating the harvest. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is now six months away.

- a) The Jewish leaders were now looking for the opportunity to arrest Jesus and put Him to death. For that reason Jesus is wary of traveling to Judea. That makes the words of His brothers the more condescending. They have rejected His teaching and claims. They are taunting Jesus, insinuating that if He was really the Messiah the leaders in Jerusalem would have accepted Him. They are accusing Him of cowering in fear of them, afraid to go to the feast.
- b) Jesus waits until the majority of people had traveled to Jerusalem, meaning He is able to take the now mostly deserted roads unnoticed. In addition, Luke 9:51-62 tells us Jesus traveled through Samaria to get to the feast, which few other Jews would have done. His caution was well merited, for 'The Jews' mentioned in John 7:11 refers to the leaders who are seeking to kill Him.
- c) Three days into the seven day feast Jesus appears at the Temple and begins to teach. This leads to a confrontation:
 - **'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?'** – The leaders are questioning Jesus' credentials to be teaching. They are seeking to discredit him.
 - Jesus first replies by pointing out that if one was truly seeking God, they would recognize that Jesus' works were from God. (vs.17-18)
 - Jesus then refers to the Sabbath controversies between He and the leaders. Healing on the Sabbath was one of their key accusations against Jesus (vs.19-24)
- d) In verses 37-39 Jesus makes one of His many 'I AM' statements. In the Greek Jesus is saying that He is 'I Am' – Yahweh. The people understand the claim He is making, and it ignites discussions among the people. (vs.40-44)
- e) John 7 records the first attempt the leaders make to arrest Jesus. The soldiers are unable to bring themselves to do it (Vs.45-49). We also see Nicodemus once again in vs.50. His defense of Jesus may indicate he has placed faith in Jesus as the Christ.

11) Jesus continues to teach at the Feast of Tabernacles – John 8

There are several events that take place as the week moves on.

a) **Jesus and the woman caught in adultery – 8:1-11**

Many Biblical scholars believe that this story did indeed take place, but was not recorded by John in his Gospel but was later inserted by scribes making copies of the Gospel. If this is the case, while we know it took place in Jerusalem, we do not know which visit.

b) **Jesus claims to be the ‘Light of the World’ – 8:12-30**

Jesus was teaching in the Court of Women, a relatively safe place for Him to be since this area was always filled with people. His claim leads to another confrontation with the leaders.

c) **Jesus declares that His truth will set you free – 8:31-38**

There were Jews who had a kind of faith and belief in Jesus that was not yet Saving Faith. They were not ready to embrace Jesus as God the Son, the Messiah. The Gospels contain many references to people who believed Jesus was from God, but was less than The Christ. Jesus challenges these people, for their shallow faith would not save them; ‘set the free’.

d) **Jesus declares He is God – 8:48-59**

These verses contain one of Jesus’ most clear claims to deity. He claims that before Abraham lived, He, Jesus, already existed. ‘I Am’ in verse 58 is the Greek version of Yahweh.

12) Jesus sends out the 72 – Luke 10:1-24

While we usually focus on the 12 Apostles, there were many others who followed Jesus. Among them are these 72 men who are sent out, like the Apostles, 2 by 2.

a) These disciples were preparing towns for the arrival of Jesus, preaching the message of The Kingdom.

b) Jesus calls them to have His compassion for those they are going to minister to (vs.2)

c) They are to trust God with their protection and provision (vs.3-4)

d) Jesus then gives them instructions on how to conduct their ministry (vs.5-12)

- They are to look for those who will host them in the town, accepting their hospitality.
- They were to meet the physical needs of people through healings and then preach the Gospel.
- Those who refused to receive them and their message were to be left, even the dust of the roads of that town was to be shaken from their sandals.

e) After a period of time, the 72 return to Jesus and give a report to Jesus (vs. 17-20). He replies:

- They are excited about all they had done during their ministry tour. Jesus replies that He saw ‘Satan Fall’ – the 72 had made a dent in Satan’s kingdom through their ministry.
- As exciting as ministry is, Jesus tells them to have greater joy in their salvation.

13) The parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37

Jesus is asked to name the greatest commandment by a Scribe. Jesus flips the question – and the Scribe answers with what we now call The Great Commandment. Seeking to justify himself, the man asks, ‘who is my neighbor?’ in other words, who am I required to love?

a) The Levite and Priest would have become unclean if they had handled a dead body, and therefore unable to minister in the Temple. They were unable to take the risk that the body on the side of the road was dead.

- b) To the Jew, no one was more despised than a Samaritan. That Jesus made one the hero a Samaritan would have been shocking and for many, making it difficult to accept the message. Jesus' point is that everyone, even our enemies, is our neighbor.

14) Dinner with Mary and Martha – Luke 10:38-42

While in Judea, the Jesus and the 12 stop in at the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. These three are close friends as well as followers of Jesus. The arrival of 13 guests meant there was now a meal to prepare. The responses of Mary and Martha serve as examples of worshiping Jesus and serving Jesus. Jesus makes the point that worship comes before serving.

15) Jesus teaches about prayer – Luke 11:1-13

Prayer was a key part of Jesus' life. For almost three years the 12 have watched Jesus spend extended time with His Father. One morning, as Jesus is returning from His prayer time, one of the Apostles asks Jesus to teach them how to pray like He prays. Jesus gives them a model and then encourages them to pray.

a) The Lord's Prayer

This is more than a prayer to say, but is model and outline to pray through.

- Worship – 'Father, hallowed be your name'
- Surrender – 'Your Kingdom come'
- Provision – 'Give us this day our daily bread'
- Confession – 'Forgive us our debts'
- Restoration – 'As we ourselves forgive'
- Enablement – 'Lead us not into temptation'

- b) We are to be persistent in prayer, because if human fathers desire to give their children good things, how much more will God the Father give us what we need and more.