

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

WEEK FOUR – JESUS CHRIST’S MINISTRY IN GALILEE

IN JERUSALEM FOR A FEAST OF THE JEWS

1) Jesus heals a man at the Pool on the Sabbath – John 5

John does not tell us which feast this was, so we are not sure exactly what time of year it is, nor exactly where this fits in the chronology of Christ’s ministry. However, Jesus travels down from Galilee to celebrate it with His disciples. While there, Jesus again is confronted by the Jewish leaders for healing on the Sabbath. As they challenge Jesus, He declares that His authority comes from God Himself, and beyond that, Jesus is God’s Son.

- a) The pool was called ‘Bethesda’ (house of mercy). It was surrounded by five covered areas that would have provided shade for the lame and invalids that were near its edge.
- b) Popular legend held that when an angel came and stirred the waters, the first person to reach its waters would be healed. The pool was spring fed. This is what caused the intermittent ‘stirring’ of the waters. The man Jesus addresses had been lame for 38 years, but had never been able to reach the water first.
- c) As Jesus sees this man He asks, ‘Do you want to be healed?’ The question is designed to reveal the heart of this man. His reply to Jesus carries a sense of sarcasm, as if to say ‘dumb question!’ The man complains no one will help him get to the water first. There is no hint that this gentleman knows who Jesus is, and therefore does not show any thought that Jesus Himself could heal him.
- d) Jesus commands the man to get up, take up his bed and walk. He responds in obedience and walks away. As he walks away, so Jews confront him for ‘breaking the Sabbath’ by carrying the mat. In reality, the man is breaking their rule but is not breaking Scripture. The Pharisee had developed a complicated set of regulations dictating what one could and could not do.
- e) As they and Jesus talk, He makes several important and revealing statements about Himself.
 - vs.15-18 - I am God’s Son, and am therefore equal with God.
 - vs. 19-20 – I am doing the work of God as He directs. My works are equal with the Father’s.
 - vs. 21 – I am equal to the Father in power and sovereignty
 - vs. 22 – I am equal to the Father as judge
 - vs. 23 – I am equal to the Father in honor
 - vs. 24 – I am the source of eternal life

JESUS CHRIST’S MINISTRY IN GALILEE

After the Feast, Jesus returns to Galilee, where both resistance and the crowds following Him grow. The resistance is coming primarily from Jewish leaders, as questions about fasting and Sabbath regulations continue. The crowds are also growing as people come from the entire region to see and hear Him.

2) Jesus is questioned about fasting - Mark 2:18-22

It is probable that John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned by this time. Also, though it was not required by the Law, many Jews and all Pharisees observed a weekly fast. Apparently while John the Baptist had either taught or modeled following this weekly fast, Jesus and His disciples were not following this practice. This explains the conversation in Mark 2:18-22. It is interesting that John the Baptist had referred to himself as the friend of the groom (Jn. 3:28-30). Jesus uses this same picture in explaining why his disciples were not fasting at the time (Mark 2:19) which might have been directed at John’s disciples.

3) Jesus declares He is Lord of the Sabbath - Mark 2:23-28

On a Sabbath afternoon Jesus and His disciples were walking through a field of grain. Being hungry, they were picking the heads, rubbing them between their hands and then eating the grain. The Pharisees interpreted two infractions of their Sabbath traditions: 1) They were undoubtedly traveling beyond the accepted distance of 3/10 of a mile; 2) They were 'working' by rubbing the grain. It is important that what the disciples are doing were perfectly within the Law of Moses.

Jesus answers:

- a) Using the example of David and his men in 1Sam. 21, Jesus points out that People's legitimate needs supersede the Ceremonial law. How much more does it supersede their man made regulations!
- b) The Sabbath had been set aside by God for the benefit of people, so they could rest from physical work and dedicate time to worship God. The Pharisees had created so many regulations that the Sabbath had become a burden for people, not a time for physical and spiritual rest and refreshment.
- c) Jesus was the Lord of the Sabbath, and not bound by their regulations. As Lord, His word was authoritative and final.

4) Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath - Mark 3:1-6

The Sabbath conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders continues later that day at the Synagogue. Jesus enters to worship, and while there deliberately heals a man. It is clear that His intention is to challenge their legalistic traditions. As the Jews watch to see if Jesus will heal the man with the intent of accusing Him of violating the Sabbath, Jesus asks them a question; "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" Their silence reveals their hardened hearts. They have no thought or compassion for the man. They are totally focused on their regulations and influence. And their desire to trap and kill Jesus. Christ's response:

- a) **He is angered** – This word is used primarily for God's anger towards sin. It is an anger that come out of God's character and holiness. Unlike words used to describe people's anger, this word does not indicate vengeance, but indicates grief towards both the sin and its effect on people. The picture is that as Jesus looks around at the Pharisees, there is a moment of anger towards their hardened hearts.
- b) **He is grieved** – This rare word describes an inner distress and grief. This word pictures an ongoing inner response of Jesus towards sin and its effects. While His anger is in the moment, His grief is an ongoing attitude towards the brokenness caused by sin.
- c) **Jesus heals the man**
- d) As a result of this interaction, the Pharisees make an alliance with the Herodian's. This political party were supporters of the Herod's and were normally at odds with the Pharisees. However, they both hate Jesus and the threat He represents to them, so are bound together by their common 'enemy'. It is important to note that they are no longer interested in discrediting and silencing Jesus. They now want to 'destroy' (kill) Jesus.

5) Jesus continues to attract growing crowds of people - Mark 3:7-12 –

As a result of this opposition with the Jewish leaders Jesus withdraws from the towns and is in a more isolated area on the Sea of Galilee. Mark notes that:

- a) The people were coming from all areas of Palestine – Judea, Galilee, Idumea (south of Judea), beyond the Jordan (east) and Tyre and Sidon (north of Galilee).
- b) Jesus needed to use a boat as a pulpit because of the crowds. This indicates that in addition to healing many He was also teaching and preaching.
- c) As Jesus heals demon possessed people He commands the demons to remain silent. He has no interest in being identified by or with them.

6) Jesus calls the 12 Apostles – Mark 3:13-21

This moment marks a significant shift in the ministry of Jesus and the lives of the 12. Luke 6:12-13 tells us that Jesus spent the night before praying, which indicates the importance of this decision. Back in Mark 3:13, 'those he desired' would have been disciples who had a commitment beyond the surface interest of those just looking for the next miracle. Out of this group of devoted followers Jesus will choose 12 men to become his core followers and the leaders of what will become known as 'The Church', which will be birthed on the day of Pentecost. It is important to note that these 12 men were first disciples (learners and followers) before being selected for this leadership role. Here are a few observations:

- a) The order of the names is important. Peter is to be the leader of the 12. He, along with James and John would make up the 'inner three', who would be especially close to Jesus.
- b) These men would become known as Apostles – 'Messenger or Representative'
- c) Jesus had three purposes in mind for them:
 - Training them by His personal example and input
 - Sending them out to preach
 - Giving them authority to heal and cast out demons.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Soon after calling the 12, Jesus climbs up one of the mountains near the Sea of Galilee. As He reaches the top, He sits down, a position a teacher took when prepared to teach. While the crowd undoubtedly was within hearing distance of Jesus, the sermon known as The Sermon on the Mount is directed at the 12, who gather around Him to listen to His words. The purpose of this sermon is to teach followers of Christ what true righteousness looks like in contrast to the self-righteousness of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). This is the character of a fully devoted follower of Christ being lived out in daily life. It is the Christ-like character that will shine as light and season as salt so the world will see Jesus through His followers. Here are some observations about the sermon, which is recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7:

- Jesus begins by describing the character of a true follower of Him. These are known as 'The Beatitudes'
- Jesus will then move on to describe the effect this character will have – creating light and salt
- Jesus then moves on to describe ways this character will impact a fully devoted follower of Christ's daily life and relationships.

7) The character qualities of a disciple of Jesus – Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus states that the person who lives out these character qualities will be 'Blessed' – Inner peace and satisfaction with all needs met.

- a) Poor in spirit – To be totally dependent on God with all humility. This includes reverence for God as well as trust.
- b) Those who mourn – To respond to personal sin with repentance and to the effect of sin on others with compassion.
- c) The meek – Humility towards others that includes kindness, gentleness and deference.
- d) Hunger and thirst for righteousness – A determination to reflect God's glory by honoring Him, obeying Him and seeking to glorify Him in all things.
- e) The Merciful – Compassion in action. It includes extending forgiveness when wronged as well as meeting needs and coming alongside those who are broken and suffering.
- f) The pure in heart – To be pure is to be free of filth and contamination. In contrast to the external self-righteousness of the Pharisees, the character of a disciple of Jesus comes from the inner person, where motives and desires are holy and result in righteous actions.
- g) The peacemakers – People who seek to help others have a healthy relationship with God, themselves and others.
- h) Those willing to suffer for Christ – Willing to be falsely accused, reviled and mistreated for Christ.

8) The impact of these character qualities – Matthew 5:13-16

It is these 8 character qualities that will enable my life to shine as a light that reveals Christ and to be salt that seasons my actions and relationships with the character of Christ.

9) The impact of these character qualities on my daily life and relationships – Matthew 5:21-7:29

a) We are to Show proper respect towards others – 5:21-26

Jesus teaches that we can murder someone with our words as well as with a weapon.

- We are not to disparage someone's character or reputation (vs. 21-22)
- We are to take responsibility for our actions towards others and seek reconciliation quickly. (vs.23-26)

b) We are to pursue purity of thought and desire as well as action – 5:27-30

c) When we enter the commitment of marriage, it is for life – 5:31-32

- The 'certificate of divorce' comes from Deut. 24:1 and was actually a form of protection for the wife. In the time of Jesus, it was used as permission to divorce one's wife for almost any reason.
- Jesus declares that the only valid reason for divorce is adultery. In 1Cor. 7 Paul will add abandonment.

d) We are to be a person of integrity, where our word is our bond – 5:33-37

- The various oaths Jesus quotes were being used in His day. The Jews had developed a kind of hierarchy of oaths that contained loopholes that would allow the person to break their promise. Jesus is saying that our word is to be followed through on and we are to be trustworthy.

e) We are to be gracious to those who wrong us and not retaliate in kind – 5:38-42

Jesus is not saying we are to allow ourselves to be abused by others, but that we are not to retaliate in kind.

There are other passages of Scripture that teach us when and how we are to confront those who wrong us. Here the focus is on the character qualities of meekness and mercy given in the Beatitudes.

- An eye for an eye – The intention of this OT principle was to prevent people from compounding the offence committed against them. Punishment was to be appropriate for the offence. In the time of Christ, this had been perverted as a command to retaliate and not show mercy.
- Turn the other cheek – a slap to the face was a high form of insult. We are not to retaliate, but if necessary allow them to strike the other as well.
- Let them have your coat – The key is that we are being sued for a legitimate debt. The law required that one could not have their outer coat confiscated to pay a debt. However Jesus says that to restore the relationship and our reputation, be willing to give out our coat.
- Go the extra mile – A Roman soldier could require a civilian to carry his pack for one mile. Jesus is teaching us to be willing to sacrifice our rights in order to be a testimony for Christ.
- Do not refuse one who wants to borrow from you – This carries the idea of meeting another person's legitimate need. This would be without interest.

f) We are to love our enemies – 5:43-48

Just as our Heavenly Father loves everyone and sends common grace and blessing to saint and sinner alike, so should we love those who are our enemies. It has been said that the true test of our love is not how we treat our friends but how we treat our enemy. When we love our enemy we are reflecting our Father.

g) We are to give and pray without hypocrisy – 6:1-8

- We are not to give in a way that invites other's applause, but quietly out of our love for God.
- We are to pray out of a love and desire for God.

h) We are to develop a prayer life that seeks God, grows our intimacy with God, surrenders to God and expresses dependency on God – 6:7-15

- The purpose of prayer is to seek God, not 'twist His arm' through set formulas of prayer
- The Lord's Prayer shows a balanced prayer life:
 - Seeking God as His children
 - Worship
 - Surrender
 - Dependence on God for physical and spiritual needs.

- i) We are to practice our spiritual disciplines with the goal of growing closer to God, not being seen by others – 6:16-18
- j) We make God and our relationship with Him our true treasure – 6:19-24
 - Only true spiritual treasure will have eternal impact
 - We are to intentionally set our desires on God and His Kingdom, not earthly pleasures
 - We have a choice to make; seek after God and His Kingdom or to seek after our own pleasures and agenda.
- k) We are to live by faith and trust in God, not in anxiety over our temporal needs – 6:25-34
 - Our being anxious about life will not do anything to change the situation
 - Our life is to be more than meeting temporal needs and desires
 - God knows us intimately and will meet our needs, often day to day
 - We are to shift our focus to seeking God and His Kingdom, trusting Him to meet our needs
- l) We are to be focused on our own faults and growth needs, not on those of others – 7:1-6
 - Often we ignore or excuse our own faults by focusing on the faults and shortcomings of others. Jesus teaches us to focus on our own lives.
 - Then if it is appropriate, speak truth in love to others with the goal of helping them to grow.
- m) We are to be persistent in praying to God for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs we have – 7:7-11
 - Ask – a general term for asking
 - Seek – refers to seeking God and His grace
 - Knock – speaks to being persistent
 - Jesus reminds us that our Father loves us and wants to meet our needs
- n) We are to live by the Golden Rule – 7:12
- o) We are to enter the narrow gate of Saving Faith in Christ and following His way – 7:13-14
- p) Our lives are to show spiritual fruit that proves we are abiding in Christ – 7:15-23
 - We are to evaluate the teaching of others who claim to be Christian leaders by the fruit of their lives
 - If we are spiritually connected to Christ our lives will reveal the fruit Jesus has been talking about in this sermon
 - It takes more than lip service and external actions to be relationally connected to Christ.
- q) If we build our lives on Jesus Christ and His teachings our lives will be built on a strong foundation – 7:24-27

JESUS CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN GALILEE – CONTINUED

10) Jesus heals the Centurion's son – Luke 7:1-10

After finishing the Sermon on the Mount Jesus returns to Capernaum, which by that time was his adopted hometown. While the Gospels record numerous times when people were amazed at Jesus, this is one of the few times we are told that Jesus was amazed by another person's faith.

- a) A Roman Centurion commanded 100 soldiers and were considered the backbone of the army. Historians portray Centurions as men who were steady and dependable leaders who could be counted on in difficult circumstances.
- b) This particular Centurion stands out in this story:
 - **His unusual love** – He highly valued this sick servant. This phrase carries the idea of personal affection as well as valuing the man's service. This concern for a servant was unusual. He also was a Gentile who was seeking to know Yahweh, the God of Israel. This seeking was noted as having a love for Israel, again,

highly unusual for a Gentile soldier. He sends a delegation to speak on his behalf at in part out of respect for Jesus. He is assuming Christ would not want to be in the presence of a Gentile.

- **His generosity** – He had put up the funds to build the local synagogue.
- **His humility** – When he hears that Jesus is coming to his house the Centurion sent friends to tell Jesus not to actually enter his house.

‘Do not trouble yourself’ – do not be bothered or agitated or inconvenienced

‘I am not worthy’ – Both as a Gentile and as a sinner

- **His faith** – He tells Jesus that he believes that just the words of Jesus would be enough to heal his servant without actually being with the servant

- c) Jesus responds with amazement at the Centurion’s faith. The man understood that Jesus as the Messiah had the authority to heal with a word. This understanding went beyond that of any Jew up to that point, including the 12. Jesus then heals the servant.

11) Jesus raises the widow’s son – Luke 7:11-17

- a) This event takes place a few days after Jesus heals the Centurion’s servant. Nain was located about 20 miles from Capernaum. As Jesus and His entourage enter the village they are met by a funeral procession.
- b) Because this man’s mother is a widow and he was her only son she was in a desperate situation. She has been left with no close family to care for her and no way to earn a living herself. Here are a few observations about Jesus and His response:
- He has compassion for her and comforts her
 - Jesus shows His divine power as He raises the man from the dead. This is the first of three people Jesus will raise from the dead
- c) As a result of this miracle the people are filled with awe, recognize God’s hand at work and declare Jesus a great prophet. In addition, the reputation of Jesus and the crowds following Him grow.

12) Messengers from John the Baptist speak to Jesus – Matthew 11:2-19

Doubt is an experience every follower of Jesus wrestles with from time to time. As John the Baptist sits in Herod’s dungeon he has his bout with it. If he has done what God called him to do, and if Jesus is the Messiah, then why is he, John, sitting in prison? Did he miss something? Is his cousin Jesus really the Messiah? John calls on some of his disciples to go question Jesus.

- a) The key question is, ‘Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?’ In response Jesus points to all He has done, including now raising a man from the dead, and sends them back to John with a word of encouragement.
- b) Jesus then testifies for John in much the same way John had for Him.
- While the Jews had debated over who John really was, Jesus testifies that he was a great prophet
 - Beyond being a prophet, John had been the forerunner of the Messiah in the spirit of Elijah
 - John was the greatest prophet in the history of the nation of Israel
 - Jesus challenges the people to respond to John’s message and trust in Him as Messiah

13) The death of John the Baptist – Mark 6:17-29

Not long after John heard the reassuring words of Jesus he is killed by Herod.

- a) The step-daughter of Herod entertains him and his guests with a dance. In an attempt to impress his guests (and undoubtedly because of the effect of the wine) he boasts he will reward her by granting any request. She consults with her mother who directs her to ask for the head of John the Baptist.
- b) Herod is dismayed by the request, but not wanting to lose face with his guests, grants her request. John’s life ends and with it ends the line of Jewish prophets.