

LUKE 5-6; MT. 5 – THE 12 DISCIPLES; THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

In the last study, we left off with Jesus Christ being almost killed in His hometown of Nazareth. In the synagogue, He told them how they showed the same lack of faith that caused God to use the widow of Zarephath or Naaman the Syrian instead of His own people. Outraged, they took Him to a ridge to throw Him off, but He miraculously escaped. This would be the last time He would preach in his hometown of Nazareth. As He said, "No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:23). In other words, familiarity breeds contempt. We also have to be careful not to fall into that mode of thinking and lack the proper respect.

So Jesus sets up His headquarters in Capernaum, a prominent town on the crossroad of trading routes and on the northern shore of the lake of Galilee. We read, "Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and *was teaching them on the Sabbath*. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority" (Luke 4:31). He taught as one knowing the Scriptures, not as the rabbis, that would simply emit differing opinions on issues. Notice also Christ faithfully taught on the Sabbath all His life—and never introduced Sunday worship. In fact, He declared He was the Lord (master and creator) of the Sabbath—certainly not of Sunday (Luke 6:5).

In the synagogue, Jesus showed He had power over demons and caused quite a stir. We read, "Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.' And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served Him" (Luke 4:36-39).

We see here that Peter had a house in Capernaum and was married, for he had a mother-in-law. In the Bible, there is never a teaching of ministers having to be celibate or unmarried. On the contrary, the general teaching is they should be married (1 Tim. 3:1-2). Incidentally, there is archaeological evidence of the ruins of a house in Capernaum that was later expanded to serve as an

octagonal meeting place and became a place of pilgrimage. It probably really was Peter's house.

After the Sabbath, many were healed after Jesus laid hands on them and prayed. Then He mentioned His mission statement to the crowd: "I must preach *the kingdom of God* to the other cities also, because *for this purpose* I have been sent' And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee" (Luke 4:43-44). So what Jesus mainly preached about was the coming kingdom of God, His role in it, and how people could be converted and practice its principles to one day be part of it.

He then begins calling disciples to His work. Three of them were nearby fishermen that had their own business—Peter, and the brothers, John and James. In the morning, these men, on two boats, had not caught any fish after a long night of net fishing. The normal commercial way to catch fish on the Lake of Galilee was by throwing a large net in a circle until the ends sank to the bottom. Then another net would be thrown around it to catch any fish that would jump out of the first net. Then the nets would be drawn in until all the fish inside were caught. It was a tedious process and usually, the same procedure was carried out four or five times a night. So, no wonder Peter and the rest were exhausted and frustrated at a night's worth of effort and not a fish to claim. Normally, the fish sought the most was called *Tilapia Galilea* that swam in schools.

We read, "So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret [Gennesaret means princely garden, since there was a large garden on its shores, and is also called Lake of Galilee] and saw two boats standing by the lake, but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' But Simon answered and said to Him, 'Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.' And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their

partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.' So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him" (Luke 5:1-11).

Peter, James and John, all experienced fishermen, had no doubts a great miracle had just occurred. So they gave everything up to become trainees of Jesus Christ, and this would last for three and a half years.

He now goes from town to town around the Lake of Galilee preaching and healing. He healed a leper in one town and we note the authorship of Luke, who had been a physician, is corroborated by his frequent use of medical terms. For instance, He uses the phrase, *pleres lepra*, which means, 'extensive leprosy.' Later, when Jesus heals a paralytic, Luke uses the medical term for the infirmity, *paralelumenos*, meaning paralysis of the legs. This healing caused a controversy, since He had told the sick man his sins had been forgiven. We read, "And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, 'Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins He said to the man who was paralyzed, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen strange things today!'" (Luke 5:21-26).

Here Christ is claiming, as the Son of God, that He had the power to forgive sins, a power reserved only for God Himself. Jesus then calls a publican (a tax collector) Levi, to be a disciple. In Mark it mentions he was the son of Alphaeus, and in Mt. 9:9,

he is also called Matthew, probably a name given when chosen an apostle. So Matthew made a great farewell feast and honored Jesus, but the scribes and Pharisees were offended. They asked Him, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well [or those who think they are well, spiritually speaking] have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, [those who acknowledge this] to repentance" (Luke 5:30-31). Again, Luke uses a medical technical term, *hoi hugiainontes*, meaning "sound health" and the word, *iatros*, a physician, the same term used to describe Luke as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

Then the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus why His disciples didn't fast like John the Baptist's disciples or the Pharisees (who did a partial fast twice a week). He explained that while He was here on earth, they would be in training, but afterwards, they would also fast (Luke 5:35). He then explains the principle of the wineskins. He was going to reveal new knowledge that needed God's spirit to be discerned and accepted. The Pharisees had minds like old wineskins, hardened and inflexible, based on their man-made traditions burdening down God's laws. Jesus was restoring God's law to its original intent.

We see this point in the next section: "Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first (it probably means the second Sabbath of the counting of the seven Sabbaths before Pentecost), that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath? But Jesus answering them said, 'have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry; he and those who were with him; how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?' And He said to them, 'The Son of man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Luke 6:1-5). Matthew 12:5-8 adds, "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known

what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless."

Jesus explained that just removing the husk of the grain (either wheat or barley) in your hands when hungry does not constitute "working" on the Sabbath. But the Pharisees had their man-made rules about the Sabbath with 39 different categories and 1521 laws which included the rule that "threshing" was anything removing the husk from the grain. Yet God's law is based on also looking at the spirit of the law, and the Pharisees would rather have the disciples go hungry than for them to eat some grain from a field, which was allowed on any given day, based on Deut. 23:25.

Then, on another Sabbath, Jesus saw a man who had a withered hand and the Pharisees were watching, ready to accuse Him of doing work on the Sabbath, since they considered healing, unless it was an emergency, was a breaking of their man-made Sabbath laws. Christ answered, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:8-11). The scribes and the Pharisees came to hate Jesus because He would not follow or teach their man-made traditions held as holy to them.

Jesus was now ready to choose His twelve principal disciples among all of them. Since they would eventually rule the 12 tribes of Israel, they would be 12 in number (Mt. 19:28). "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles [it means sent out ones with authority]. Mark 3:14 adds, "that He might send them forth to preach." Last on the list of the twelve was "Judas Iscariot [Iscariot means 'man from Kerioth,' a Judean town] who also became a traitor" (Luke 6:16).

It is at this time Jesus gave the greatest sermon ever given—the Sermon on the Mount. He gave it on a level place (Luke 6:17), probably on the side of the mountain north of Capernaum. Here, Christ goes over the essential characteristics of a

Christian that will enter the kingdom of God. He would also fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 42:21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable." Christ affirms He did this in Mt. 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." The term "fulfill" is *pleirou* in the Greek and means "to fill to the fullest level." That's exactly what Jesus did with God's law in the Sermon on the Mount.

Let's look at the context of this magnificent sermon. He had recently been criticized by the scribes and the Pharisees for not keeping their traditions in regards to the Sabbath and other commandments. So Jesus uses this occasion to *contrast* the original intent of God's law with the Pharisaic man-made teachings which distorted it.

The Sermon on the Mount is given to a multitude of people (Mt. 7:28) and is found in Mt. 5-7 and Luke 6. To understand its focus, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* mentions, "Jesus instructed them in view of His announcement of the coming kingdom (Mt. 4:17). Some natural questions on the heart of every Jew would have been, 'Am I eligible to enter Messiah's kingdom? Am I righteous enough to qualify for entrance? The only standard of righteousness the people knew was that laid down by the current religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. Would one who followed that standard be acceptable in Messiah's kingdom?' Jesus' sermon therefore must be understood in the context of His offer of the kingdom to Israel and the need for repentance to enter that kingdom. The sermon did not give a 'Constitution' for the kingdom nor did it present the way of salvation. The sermon showed how a person who is in a right relationship with God should conduct his life....Jesus began His sermon with 'the Beatitudes,' statements beginning with *Blessed are*. 'Blessed' means 'happy' or 'fortunate' (Ps. 1:1). The qualities Jesus mentioned in this list, 'the poor in spirit,' 'those who mourn,' 'the meek,' etc., obviously could not be products of Pharisaic righteousness. The Pharisees were concerned primarily with external qualities, but the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal. These come only when one is properly related to God through faith, when one places his complete trust in God."

Next time, please read and study all of Mt. 5.