

## Overview of Jesus' First Tour of Galilee Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44

The first year of Jesus' ministry is ending. It has been one dominated by preaching, yet His healing had drawn large crowds. Jesus will now expand His influence by going on a tour of Galilee.

Jesus entered Galilee after what most scholars believe could have been up to a year of ministering in Judea. He first preached in the synagogue of Nazareth and was violently rejected by His own townspeople. He then moved His home base to Capernaum. It was at this time Christ called Peter, Andrew, James, and John after the miracle of a great catch of fish. Though these men had been with Jesus during the early Judean ministry, now they left their livelihood to follow Jesus full-time. In the books of Mark and Luke, we are next given an unusual glimpse of a full day in the life of Christ. It was a Sabbath and He taught in the synagogue of Capernaum. While there He healed a demon-possessed man. Later that afternoon at Peter's home, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, who had fallen desperately ill. The word concerning these two healings spread quickly and by sundown, marking the end of the Sabbath, the Bible tells us, "all the city was gathered together at the door." bearing the sick of body, mind, and spirit. Down the street and around the corner the line must have stretched, and it tells us in Matthew 8:16, "he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:" Jesus' work of healing and mercy must have lasted late into the night. How exhausted the God-man must have been. How excited Peter and the other followers of Jesus must have been. The Messiah, in the person of Jesus, had come, He was ministering in their town, to their people! **And now**, we move into the next day.

**"<sup>35</sup>And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary ("desert" (deserted; lonely; no people) Luke 4:42) place, and there prayed. <sup>36</sup>And Simon and they that were with him followed after him ("sought him," Lit. - hunted Him down Luke 4:42). <sup>37</sup>And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee ("and stayed" Gk - restrained Luke 4:42) him, that he should not depart from them." Luke 4:42)." Mark 1:35-37**

### I. A Movement toward Change

Mark and Luke give us the details of the process taken toward this change in ministry.

#### A. Concentrated Prayer

- "rising up a great while before day," – In the Gospels, we will often read of Jesus going off quietly by Himself to pray after a busy day. In this passage, commentaries set this time of day during the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night, 3-6 am, definitely before sunrise. In Palestine, daybreak is somewhere between 6-6:30 am most of the year. After an extremely busy day, Jesus disciplined Himself, knowing the importance of prayer, and went out to talk privately with His Father. What an example to us. What are some benefits Jesus gained from this early morning prayer schedule? Privacy, no interruptions, ample time, freedom to talk, cry, worship, read/quote Scripture, and be verbal. These and many more can be our benefits too!
- "sought him," – Keep in mind who was seeking Jesus, Peter, probably James, Andrew, and John. Some believe there could have been up to seven who were following Jesus now. By the way, this is the first time we see Peter taking an active role as a leader among the followers of Christ. The English translation "sought him"/"followed after him" is actually very weak compared to the Greek words! Here are some other examples of this thought found in other translations. "looked for; tracked him down; went after him; desperately searched for; eagerly searched for; anxiously searched for; hunted him down (most popular usage); pursued him; frantically searched for" We hear a lot of action and emotion in these translations!

- “stayed him” – When Peter and the others finally found Jesus, the first words that they said were, “All men seek for thee.” These verses ring with pride! “Come back! All men are looking for you!”

**“<sup>38</sup>And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also (“I must preach the kingdom of God (1<sup>st</sup> use in the book of Luke) to other cities also :” Luke 4:43): for therefore came I forth (“am I sent .” Luke 4:43). Mark 1:38**

This was not the answer the disciples wanted to hear, and we can be sure they were disappointed by it. When Jesus started to make known to His followers His plan to minister throughout Galilee, they tried to talk Jesus out of leaving Capernaum. Why? 1) The crowds had returned, probably lined up, and ready for another day of miraculous healings! 2) Jesus’ popularity was growing and in the minds of Peter and the others, this was certainly the best scenario for Jesus as Messiah. The plan of Jesus didn’t seem to make sense. There was still a great need for healing in their town! But Jesus was.....

## B. Committed to the Plan of God

- “Let us go into the next towns,” – The area of Galilee was about 60 miles long by 30 miles wide. We are told there were about 250 towns and villages at the time of Christ, many with synagogues. The temptation would have been to enjoy the popularity and ease in Capernaum while the duty of the preaching ministry of Christ was difficult and would ultimately be rejected!
- “kingdom of God” – We often think of a kingdom as a place and domain. But the phrase, “kingdom of God” speaks more of the rule, reign, or authority. Wycliffe said this of the phrase, “The realm and rule of God through the Messiah was the subject of the Savior’s preaching. His ethics, his deeds, his redemptive work, and his promise to return all belong within the scope of this subject.” p. 1036 Jesus’ life and ministry were lived out preaching the “kingdom of God.” -Character of God as ruler – John 1:18; -Expectations for the citizens – Matthew 5-7
  1. His teachings – mind & philosophy of God
  2. His deeds – healings, compassionate acts, judgment against hypocrisy
  3. His death – sacrificial death for our sin
  4. His future – Promise of his return for us

“God is with you; Cares for you; heals; forgives; freedom, peace, hope, eternal life” – Lepers, woman at the well, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, Matthew, woman with the issue of blood, etc....
- “I must preach”/“therefore came I forth”/“am I sent.” – Do you feel the urgency of Christ in these statements? He was bound by this duty! John 4:34; 5:19, 36; 9:4; 17:4 This was part of the overall reason He came to earth! He was not sent solely for humanitarian relief! Jesus was sent and commissioned by God to preach that the Messiah had come, God’s promise had been kept! Now He must turn from the popularity of Capernaum to go to the unreached villages of Galilee.

I found an interesting quote that all those who serve in churches and ministries must understand and apply. Shepard said, “A misplaced over-emphasis on institutional, eleemosynary and educational endeavor has often swamped the progress of world evangelization.” p. 134 We must be on guard that within our churches, we do not get so involved in the programs, systems, charitable acts, and extensive educational programs, to fully and correctly give the Gospel that we forget to simply give out the Gospel. In this event of Jesus, we clearly see

what was at the core of Jesus' heart; for men to understand the message of the kingdom of God – the coming of the Messiah for the world.

**“<sup>39</sup>And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.” Mark 1:39**

This verse is Mark's overview/summary of this first Galilean ministry. Preaching is the center and the whole of Galilee was the scope. (“throughout all Galilee” was not just a matter of speech or an exaggeration.) We will see Matthew will make an extensive list of the types of healings Jesus performed in Galilee but Mark only mentions the casting out of demons! Jesus' doctrine is the devil's destruction!

**II. The First Galilean Tour** Jesus had not spent much time in Galilee. He will now spend about two years in extensive ministry in this area. Here we have Matthew's overview verses concerning the first Galilean tour. The focus will be the presentation of the Gospel of the Kingdom to the Jews! But it will go far beyond the borders of Galilee!

**“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel (Lit. – good news) of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” Matthew 4:23**

A. The Emphasis of Jesus' Ministry – The Gospel of the Kingdom Because Matthew wrote to the Jews, he will use this statement often. As a nation, they were waiting for the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom. Matthew will remind them Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise! The truth of the Good News will be given and supported by three works of Christ – teaching; preaching; healing

- “teaching” – a concern for understanding; Jesus was often called Teacher or Rabbi. This speaks to the amount of teaching Jesus did daily. A synagogue was a meeting place for Jews outside the temple in Jerusalem. They could meet on the Sabbath for teaching and for the rest of the week the synagogue was used as a Jewish schoolhouse. If ten or more families live in a city or village a synagogue was constructed.
- “preaching” – a concern for commitment; Jesus' desire for all that would hear Him was to not just listen, but to make those teachings foundational in their lives! He called everyone to a personal commitment! When we will read the sermons of Christ in the Gospels, often we don't even realize the shift He makes from teaching to the call to commitment. *Walk through the Sermon on the Mount: 5:14-16; 21-24; 6:25-34 – reaction v. 28-29 We call this a sermon but as in all good preaching there is teaching and preaching happening simultaneously – 5:2; 7:29*
- “healing” – a concern for wholeness; The Jews always desired a sign – wondrous miracles. But let's not be too hard on them, they read in the Old Testament their Messiah would come as a miracle worker. (Is 35:4-6) Nicodemus recognized the hand of God on Jesus. (John 3:2) *“sign” desired – Matt. 12:38; 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; John 2:18; 4:48; 6:30*

Teaching and preaching were always first in the life of Christ. Though the physical needs of the people were real, and He often meet them openly, miracles were a sign of the truth of who and why He came to earth!

**“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were**

lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them (Gk verb – continually healing action).”  
**Matthew 4:24**

#### B. The Result of Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee

- “fame” – The word about Jesus’ healings spread throughout the greater Galilean area. Here we have “throughout all Syria:” This phrase is referring to north of Galilee. This fame was centered on His healings, really not on the truth of who and why He came! But when they arrived they heard from His lips truth!
- “divers diseases and torments,” – These words are used in summary of all the various illnesses, body pain, mental illnesses, and the demon possession Jesus healed. Then Matthew becomes more specific:
  - “possessed with devil” – When a demon/demons entered the body of an individual, the outcome was one of **physical and mental torture!** These demons inflicted self-mutilation, abnormal fears and strength, and loss of personal control. Both the inflicted and those around them were helpless! (Mark 4:17-18; 21-24) But with Jesus' very presence the demons both recognized the person of Christ, the Son of God, and had to obey His voice!
  - “lunatic” – Every source I read referenced this meaning **epileptic**. The mind and the physical/chemical makeup of the brain that causes someone seizures. It is believed mentally handicapped would have fallen into this category. Jesus could heal the sickness of the mind and make them whole!
  - “palsy” – Here the commentaries agreed the problem was paralysis. Whether illness inflicted or injury, they were bedridden. Think of all the broken bones that could cause immobility – broken back, leg, hip, neck... Jesus could lay His hand on them, or simply help them up, and suddenly the formerly broken body would be leaping for joy!

We can be confident that during His 3+ years of ministry, Jesus will heal thousands of people! Be aware, that Jesus did not heal every single sick person He encountered. (John 5:1-15 – only one man among many healed)

**“And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.” Matthew 4:25**

#### C. The Extent of Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee

- “great multitudes” – “Great” means “Great”! We have examples of the feedings of the 4000 and 5000 being great. Remember, those given numbers were only for men, but there were also women and children. Those numbers could easily double.
- “Galilee,” – The immediate area of Galilee.
- “Decapolis,” – A league of 10 Gentile cities east of the Jordan River joined together for commerce and protection under the rule of Syria.
- Jerusalem,” – Jerusalem was in Judea, the religious and political center of Israel. There were over 80,000 people in Jerusalem at that time!

- “Judea,” – Judea was the area, or we might think of it as the state Jerusalem was located in.
- “beyond Jordan.” – The Jordan River divided Judea and the most Jewish population from Perea. This statement would be highlighting the fact that Jesus was popular with people from this area as well.

Add to this Syria from Matt. 4:24 and the extent of Jesus’ Galilean ministry went far beyond the borders of Galilee. If we would take a map and draw a circle including these areas described, we find that all of Palestine and the adjacent areas came under the influence of Jesus’ ministry! But don’t miss the fact that both Jews and Gentiles came to see Jesus and He received them all! He had an impartial ministry!

NOTE – One area around Galilee is not mentioned. Samaria Why? Not sure. We know Jesus had spent time giving them the Good News of the Kingdom and they knew He was the Savior of the world! (John 4)

### **Believer’s Application:**

1. Prayer was an important part of Jesus’ life. He did not live independently from his Father. How much more should we live with prayer as a central part of our life? Prayer is a vital link between us and God. One of my favorite books on Jesus by JD Pentecost said, “Prayer is an attitude of complete dependence on God.” It was essential to Christ’s life and ministry. He didn’t live independently of the Father. The Holy Spirit indwelt, God-in-the-flesh man, prayed! He took time and sacrificed personal comfort to do it. He wanted privacy, no interruptions, and ample time to seek wisdom, and strength, and to work through the needs He desired to petition. We must follow this wonderful example! If Jesus needed solitude for prayer, how much more do we?

*Verses on starting one’s day out with prayer – Ps. 5:3; 57:7-9, 59:16; 119:147*

“He that is first and best ought to have the first and the best.” Matthew Henry p. 1521

Why pray at the start of your day?

- 1) Meet God before meeting temptation
- 2) Meet God before meeting the circumstances of life
- 3) Meet God before talking with other people
- 4) Fellowship with God helps to set your priorities and your heart with truth

2. Jesus helped the people in many ways, but preaching was at the core of His relationship with men. That is our example. We need to be giving the “Kingdom of Heaven” to those God brings to us! Peter and probably the rest of the followers of Christ seemed surprised Jesus didn’t want to oblige the crowd and return to the convenience of Capernaum to set up a healing ministry. The disciples were learning a wonderful truth from Jesus that we too must learn. Spiritual learning and growth are always more important to God than comfort, ease, and a carefree, happy existence! This reminds me of Isaac Watts’ hymn, “Am I a Soldier of the Cross.” The second verse has this phrase, “Must I be carried to the skies on flower beds of ease, while others fight to win the prize, or sail through bloody seas.” Our default is definitely “flowery beds of ease!” No extremes, no trouble, no fears, so rejections, no uncomfortable situations, no over-extending, day after day, week after week, month after month; year after year, just “Flower beds of ease.” But this is not what God has called us to. As Jesus’ feet left the ground in His ascension, He called us to give the Gospel to the world and make disciples. This was Christ’s driving force while on earth and He called us to do the same. To be a follower of Jesus means we don’t always get to live in ease. In this incident of Jesus, He is teaching both His immature followers and us that He was more than a miracle worker! He had come to give spiritual life and eternal truth! This must also be our earthly goal and driving desire!

