

Session 14: Jesus Facing Increasing Opposition

Following the murder of John the Baptist, feeding five thousand men, walking on the water, healing multitudes in Gennesaret, and growing criticism from the Pharisees, Jesus departs Jewish territory to seek a break from the crowds and critics. But even outside Israel, Jesus reputation continues to grow and crowds gather wherever He goes.

This synoptic section only has parallels between the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

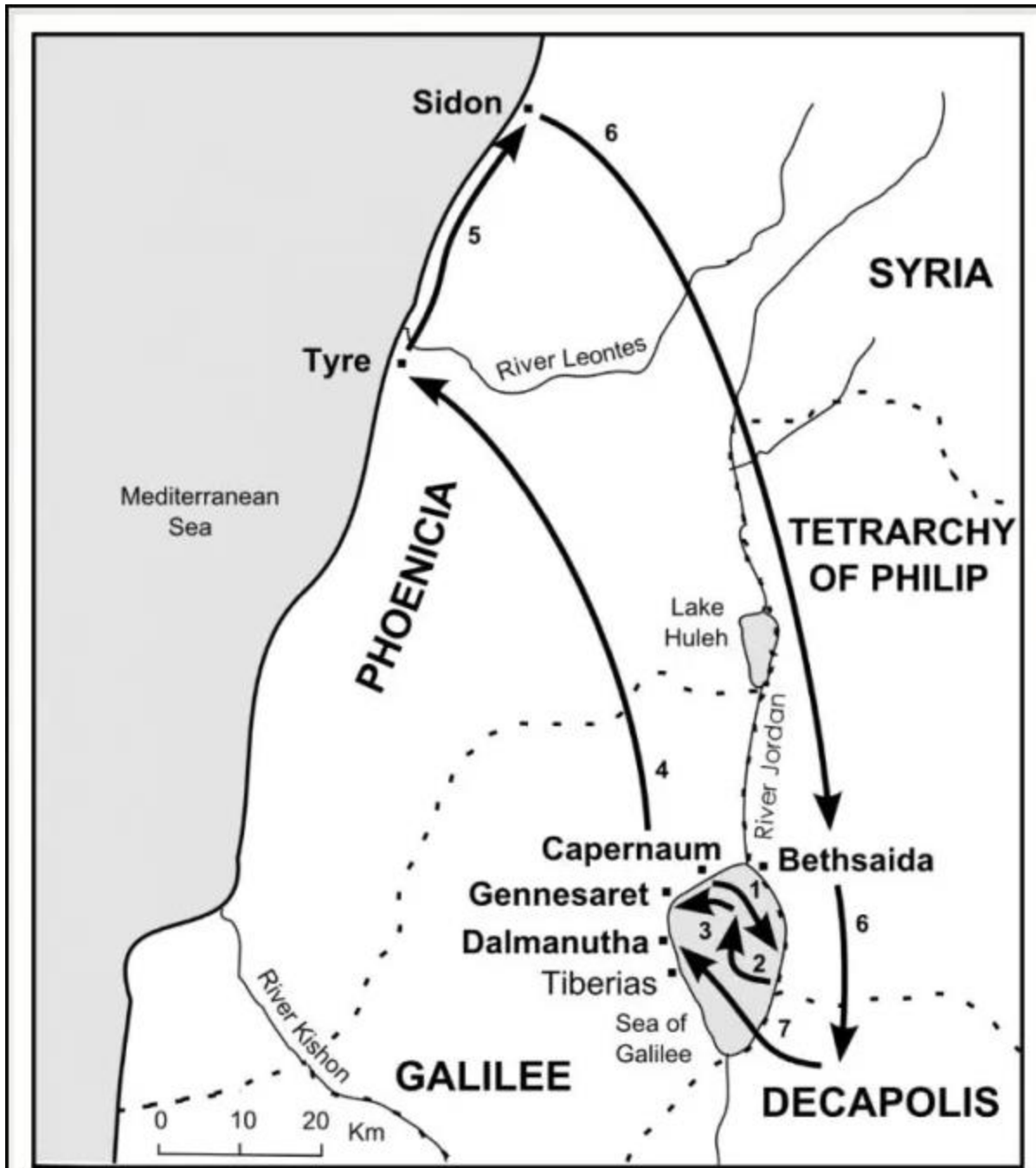
Matthew 15:21-16:12; Mark 7:24-8:26

The Second Withdrawal to Tyre/Sidon and the Healing of a Canaanite Daughter

| Matthew 15:21-28 | Mark 7:24-30 |
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| <p>21 And going away from there, Jesus withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.</p> | <p>24 Now Jesus stood up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He was wanting no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice.</p> |
| <p>22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."</p> | <p>25 But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet.</p> |
| <p>23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and were pleading with Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us."</p> | <p>26 Now the woman was a Greek, of Syrophenician descent. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.</p> |
| <p>24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."</p> | <p>27 And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."</p> |
| <p>25 But she came and was bowing down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"</p> | <p>28 But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs."</p> |
| <p>26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."</p> | <p>29 And He said to her,</p> |
| <p>27 But she said, "Yes, Lord;</p> | |

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| <p><i>but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."</i></p> <p>28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." <i>And her daughter was healed at once.</i></p> | <p><i>"Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter."</i></p> <p>30 <i>And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.</i></p> |
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Jesus moves from Gennesaret on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean coast of Tyre and Sidon, about 35 miles. Mark tells us He is trying to keep their presence on the 'down low', but even in non-Jewish Phoenicia, word of Jesus and His power to heal has spread among the common people, and a Canaanite woman, a Syrian born locally in Phoenicia, seeks Jesus for help with her demon-possessed daughter. This short passage has some candid language, in some ways similar to Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus speaks in a mini-parable, using metaphorical language. Matthew tells us Jesus says He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This would not include this Canaanite-Syrian-Phoenician-Greek woman. Between the two gospel writers, they have used every derisive term they could use to point out she is not a Jew. Jesus reference to children is a metaphor for the Children of Israel. Jesus has come to bring bread, to feed, to care for, God's lost children. The dogs are not feral, wild dogs, but little dogs, puppies, a metaphor for anyone who is not a Jew. For someone who would not be expected to know anything about a Messiah or Jewish practices, she shows a deep insight into who Jesus is. Matthew records she calls Jesus 'Lord' and 'Son of David', Jesus' Jewish messianic title. She does not shy away from the non-Jew 'dog' description, but seems to lean into it, agreeing that even those little dogs/puppies that scramble under the table are blessed by the crumbs that fall their way. Her faith gains her what she seeks, a wordless miracle that does not need any outward signs to accomplish.



Avoiding the Territory of Herod Antipas; Healing a Deaf/Mute Man

| Matthew 15:29-38 | Mark 7:31-8:9 |
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| <p>29 <i>And departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there.</i></p> <p>30 <i>And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them.</i></p> <p>31 <i>So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.</i></p> | <p>31 <i>And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis.</i></p> <p>32 <i>And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they pleaded with Him to lay His hand on him.</i></p> <p>33 <i>And Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue;</i></p> <p>34 <i>and looking up to heaven with a sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!"</i></p> <p>35 <i>And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.</i></p> <p>36 <i>And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He was ordering them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.</i></p> <p>37 <i>And they were utterly astonished, saying, "He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."</i></p> |

Matthew ignores or presumes readers understanding of local geography. Mark at least points out Jesus' path is not a direct route. Sidon is the opposite direction from the way back to the south eastern shore where the 10 cities (Decapolis) are located. See the map on page 3 for this circuitous journey marked 5 + 6. This route would have kept Jesus outside Jewish territory for the longest time.

Think about how this miracle differs from the one just before it. Why does this miracle involve 'hands-on' by Jesus? Why does it take more than one action? Why does it require speaking? Was this an especially hard miracle that required extra effort from God to accomplish? More likely, it is a reflection of the faith of the person healed. Jesus could raise the Centurion's daughter from the dead without seeing her. He just cast out a demon without a word or physical action. Is it possible this deaf-mute's faith required more to help him believe that Jesus could heal him? Revisit Matthew 13:54-58:

⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous

powers?” they asked. ⁵⁵ “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.” ⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Feeding Four Thousand Men

| Matthew 15:32-38 | Mark 8:1-9 |
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| <p>32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, “I feel compassion for the crowd, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”</p> <p>33 And the disciples said to Him, “Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?”</p> <p>34 And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few small fish.”</p> <p>35 And He directed the crowd to sit down on the ground;</p> <p>36 and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and kept giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.</p> <p>37 And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full.</p> <p>38 And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.</p> | <p>1 In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them,</p> <p>2 “I feel compassion for the crowd because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat.</p> <p>3 “And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.”</p> <p>4 And His disciples answered Him, “Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?”</p> <p>5 And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.”</p> <p>6 And He directed the crowd to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them. And He kept giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the crowd.</p> <p>7 And they also had a few small fish; and after He blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well.</p> <p>8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces.</p> <p>9 Now about four thousand were there, and He sent them away.</p> |

Jesus finds Himself again surrounded by throngs of people. After three days in the wilderness, Jesus is moved by the physical needs of the crowd and once again calls His followers to feed them. It is easy to think the Apostles were really dense to have forgotten His recent feeding of five thousand men in a similar situation. Before we think too harshly, consider how many similar miracles you have witnessed firsthand. While it is one thing to believe that God can and does act miraculously to meet the needs of people, it is another to become so familiar and comfortable with the miraculous that you expect it to happen every time. There is no question that the Apostles were familiar with Jesus doing the miraculous. It is a good thing that they did not expect Him to do it all the time, every day. When God leads His people out of Egypt, he provides them daily signs of His presence. He sends daily provision for their physical needs in the form of manna. And yet they complain to Moses they want more miracles every day.

Visit to Magadan (Dalmanutha); Attacks by Pharisees and Sadducees

| Matthew 15:39-16:4 | Mark 8:10-12 |
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| <p>39 And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CHAPTER 16 <i>The Pharisees and Sadducees Test Jesus</i></p> <p>1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.</p> <p>2 But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.'</p> <p>3 "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?</p> <p>4 "An evil and adulterous generation eagerly seeks for a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away.</p> | <p>10 And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.</p> <p>11 And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.</p> <p>12 And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."</p> |

Jesus leaves the crowds in the Decapolis to cross to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Whether called Magadan or Dalmanutha, the location of either is not definitely known. See the map on page 3 arrow 7. Arriving Jesus is confronted again by the Pharisees. Who knew the old mariner's adage was over two thousand years old: Red sky at night, sailors' delight. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning. When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus did not

perform a sign on the spot for John’s followers. He told them to tell John what He was doing.

Matthew 11:4-6

⁴ Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

The Pharisees can only see Messiah through their preconceived interpretations, and Jesus does not meet their expectations. This can be a real problem in today’s world when we allow our preconceived notions of God to prevent us from seeing God for who He is—the very God of creation. More powerful than we can imagine, more glorious than we can imagine, more holy than we can imagine, more loving than we can imagine, more creative than we can imagine. God help us not to try and define what You can do. Give us eyes to see how You are at work in our lives and our world to bring redemption and restoration, and thank you that we can be Your hands and feet to work Your will.

Retirement to Bethsaida (Territory of Herod Philip)

| Matthew 16:5-12 | Mark 8:13-26 |
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| <p>5 <i>And coming to the other side of the sea, the disciples had forgotten to bring bread.</i></p> <p>6 <i>And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”</i></p> <p>7 <i>Now they began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring bread.”</i></p> <p>8 <i>But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?”</i></p> | <p>13 <i>And leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.</i></p> <p>14 <i>And they had forgotten to take bread and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.</i></p> <p>15 <i>And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”</i></p> <p>16 <i>And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.</i></p> <p>17 <i>And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?”</i></p> <p>18 <i>“HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember,</i></p> <p>19 <i>when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces</i></p> |

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| <p>9 <i>“Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up?”</i></p> <p>10 <i>“Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up?”</i></p> <p>11 <i>“How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”</i></p> <p>12 <i>Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.</i></p> | <p><i>you picked up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.”</i></p> <p>20 <i>“When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.”</i></p> <p>21 <i>And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”</i></p> <p>22 <i>And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and pleaded with Him to touch him.</i></p> <p>23 <i>And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He was asking him, “Do you see anything?”</i></p> <p>24 <i>And he looked up and was saying, “I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.”</i></p> <p>25 <i>Then again, He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored and began to see everything clearly.</i></p> <p>26 <i>And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”</i></p> |
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Getting into a boat again, they sail from the western shore to Bethsaida on the northern end of the eastern shore. The boat trip allows another parable for the Apostles to struggle with. Matthew spells out they finally get the caution of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Mark adds some chastising words from Jesus v17b-18 and proof that the Apostles could miss the forest for the trees since they did remember how much excess bread was collected from Jesus mass feeding miracles. Mark concludes with another multi-step progressive miracle for a blind man.

Memory Verse

So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:31

Discussion Questions

- 1. As you think about the various miracles Jesus performs and how each seems tailored to the faith of the person healed, what does that say to you about how Jesus can work miracles in your life?**
- 2. Is it easy to be critical of the Apostles when they don't seem to grasp who Jesus is and what he can do? Do you see the same tendencies in your own life? Do you do any better than the Apostles did?**
- 3. Jesus is critical of the Pharisees for demanding a sign. Do you often seek signs from God to prove who He says He is? Is there a danger in that thinking?**
- 4. Even in the face of God's miraculous work in your life, is it easy to lose sight of those past events and lose faith or feel God is not listening to you are acting in your life? If so, how do you change that?**