

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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#### **Special Note:**

It is difficult to be very precise in arranging the gospels chronologically. Sometimes the authors only loosely follow chronology; often they write topically. The sequence as followed in these lessons are my own conclusions. I encourage each student to think for yourself and examine whether a better chronological arrangement can be constructed.

There will be a good bit of reading in these two segments. I have tried to include all parallel passages where an episode takes place, but I have **marked in bold the particular passage to study for class.**

This study is offered in the hope that we will become more acquainted with the life of the One who is *our life*: Jesus, the Son of God.

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Embry Hills 2005

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 1: The Work Begins**

#### **1. Introduction**

An exact chronological reconstruction of Jesus' life is a difficult undertaking. This is because the gospel accounts are not intended to be complete biographical sketches:

“... rich as are the narrative of the Gospels, materials do not exist for a complete biography of the “Life” of Jesus. There is a gap, broken only by a single incident, from His infancy till His 30th years; there are cycles of events out of myriads left unrecorded (Jn 21:25) ... there are general summaries of periods of activity com- prised in a few verses. The evangelists, too, present their materials each from his own standpoint ... In reproducing the history respect must be had to this focusing from distinct points of view” (*Int’l Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 1631).

A comparative examination of the gospels gives a thorough and accurate record of the events and teaching of Jesus’ life, a record that produces evidence of the identity and person of Jesus upon which a saving conviction may be founded. This is the true pur- pose of the inspired gospels, and we should remember this when frustrated by trying to harmonize the biographical details of Jesus’ life.

1. Briefly describe what you know about each of the gospel writers.

## 2. John Baptizes Jesus

*//Texts:* **Mt 3:13-17**; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22

*(Note: When parallel passages are given, the one in **bold** is the principal reference for our study unless otherwise indicated.)*

John began his work in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Lk 3:1-3) whose reign commenced in the fall of AD 14. Luke also notes that Jesus began His ministry at about 30 years old (Lk 3:23). The act which serves to inaugurate Jesus for His role as Savior of the world is His baptism by John. While John baptized for repentance and remission of sins, Jesus needs neither. However, it is to “*fulfill all righteousness*” that John, the prophetic fore-runner of the Messiah, baptizes Jesus. The humble, ordinary act of baptism is made more significant by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Father’s voice of approval.

2. What did John say he needed from Jesus?

3. What was Jesus doing when the Spirit manifested Himself as a dove (Lk 3:21)?

4. What did the Father say at Jesus’ baptism?

## 3. Temptation in the Wilderness

*//Texts:* **Mt 4:1-11**; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13. Jesus’ fitness to serve as high priest for all mankind demanded first-hand exposure to the temptations which humans face (Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16). This the Savior experiences in a concentrated form immediately following His baptism. First, He endures a forty-day fast which wears upon Him physi- cally and mentally. Then, Satan approaches with a set of propositions designed to make Jesus doubt His relationship with God. The first two propositions, as Matthew records them, begin with “*If you are the Son of God ...*”. The first brings into question God’s pro- visions for Jesus while the second challenges God’s protection of Him. The third proposi- tion is an appeal to Jesus’ ambitions. He did come into the world to receive complete authority and become Lord of all, but did He really

want to achieve this by God's will? That, of course, involved hard work, frustrations, suffering and other unpleasantness of human life. Wouldn't it be easier to simply bow to Satan and take possession of the world's kingdoms without all the fuss? But Jesus resists the onslaught of the devil and places His trust squarely upon the word of God.

5. How did Jesus come to be in the wilderness?

6. Until when does Satan depart from Jesus (Lk 4:13)?

#### **4. Jesus' First Disciples**

After His wilderness experience, Jesus returns to John who is now baptizing in Betha-bara (Bethany) beyond the Jordan (Jn 1:28-51). John's testimony regarding Jesus encourages two of his disciples to follow Jesus, one of whom is Andrew, the other possibly John. Peter and Nathanael (probably Bartholomew) also follow Him, as does Philip. His job nearly done, this marks the beginning of John's eclipse by Jesus.

7. What indicates that the disciples have spiritual interests prior to meeting Jesus?

#### **5. Jesus' First Miracle**

Jesus returns to Galilee with His new disciples and attends a wedding in Cana (Jn 1:43; 2:1-12). On this occasion Jesus' miraculous powers are manifested "*and His disciples be-lieved in Him.*" This is the beginning of their training program. Much of the next three years or so will be devoted to firmly grounding this fledgling belief.

8. Who accompanies Jesus from Cana to Capernaum?

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### **Lesson 2: The Early Judean Ministry**

#### **1. The First Cleansing of the Temple**

John is the only biographer to record these early events in Judea (Jn 2:13-4:42). The occasion of this trip from Galilee to Judea is the Passover (Jn 2:13), the first of three specifically mentioned by John in his gospel (see Jn 6:4; 11:55). Jesus does not choose diplomacy but confrontation in His first public act in Jerusalem: He storms through the temple compound overturning tables of money and driving out the merchants who were desecrating God's spiritual house (Jn 2:13-22). When challenged by the impenitent Jews, Jesus gives a veiled response which anticipates His death and resurrection.

1. What did Jesus' disciples think when they saw Him cleanse the temple?
2. In what sense does Jesus use the word "temple" in Jn 2:19?
3. When did the disciples fully understand Jesus' meaning of this statement?

## **2. Other Signs During Passover**

Jesus performed other works called "signs" during Passover, resulting in a degree of belief within many Jews (Jn 2:23-25). However, Jesus does not become overconfident with the rising tide of popularity "*because He knew all men ... and He knew what was in man.*" Jesus knows that men are fickle, shallow and easily swayed and realizes that His popularity will ebb and flow before finally failing Him in the end.

4. Who are especially impressed by Jesus' works during Passover (Jn 4:45)?

## **3. A Conversation with Nicodemus**

An example of incomplete belief based upon signs is that of Nicodemus, a member of the highest ruling body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, who comes to meet Jesus personally (Jn 3:1-15). Nicodemus rightly concludes from Jesus' works that He is a teacher from God, but Jesus immediately challenges Nicodemus' understanding of spiritual things. Nicodemus puzzles over the concept of being "born again" and further struggles with the idea of being "born of the Spirit." Jesus gently rebukes His pupil: "*Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?*" The Jews had every resource to understand the significance of Jesus' word and actions but had become blinded by traditions and assumptions.

5. What was Nicodemus not understanding (Jn 3:11-12)?
6. What must happen to Jesus before man's belief can result in eternal life (Jn 3:14)?
7. Why were the Jews already refusing to come to the light of Christ (Jn 3:19-20)?

## **4. Baptizing in Judea**

Jesus leaves Jerusalem and ventures out into the rural areas of Judea to baptize in preparation for the coming kingdom (Jn 3:22-26). This, however, stirs up jealousy among John's disciples who complain to the great prophet that one whom he had baptized is now baptizing others and surpassing him in popularity. Their jealousy marks Jesus as a rival even as will happen later with the Pharisees. John, however, sees this turn of events through spiritual eyes (Jn 3:27-36). He humbly acknowledges his preparatory role and diminishing purpose.

8. What does John acknowledge about the One who comes from heaven (Jn 3:31)?

## **5. Returning through Samaria**

Jesus now decides to terminate His work in Judea and return to Galilee for two reasons:

- 1) the Pharisees take note of His soaring popularity (Jn 4:1-3), and 2) John has been arrested by Herod Antipas (Mt 4:12). Perhaps Jesus is concerned that the Pharisees will be emboldened in

their opposition against Him by the imprisonment of John. Whatever the case, this is not the time for a “showdown” between Jesus and the Pharisees; there is yet more work to be done.

The most direct route back to Galilee was through Samaria, a route avoided by most Jews “*for the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*” (Jn 4:9). But Jesus chose this route and as a result brought nearly a whole city to belief (Jn 4:4-42). The interview with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob reveals the moral decadence, religious controversy and Messianic expectations of the day. Interestingly, it is to a Samaritan, not a pure Jew, that Jesus first directly reveals His Messiahship (Jn 4:26).

9. Jesus has used the terms “temple,” “born again,” and “living water.” What kind of terms are these? Were they understood at first?
10. What did the Samaritan woman expect from the Messiah when He would come?
11. What was Jesus’ “food” (Jn 4:34)?
12. How did the belief of Sychar’s citizens grow (Jn 4:42)?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 3: The Galilean Ministry (1)**

#### **1. The Great Galilean Ministry Begins**

Jesus now returns to Galilee for an extended and successful period of work (Lk 4:14; Jn 4:43-45). The bulk of Jesus’ teaching and miracle-working will take place in Galilee thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah as cited by Matthew (Mt 4:13-16). His message centers upon the swiftly-approaching kingdom (*//Texts: Mt 4:17; Mk 1:14-15; Lk 4:15*).

Jesus is again in Cana when He is approached by a royal official, probably from the court of Herod Antipas, and asked to heal his son (Jn 4:46-54). While the miracle is noteworthy for many reasons, the growth of the nobleman’s faith is of particular significance. Jesus at first rebukes the shallow belief that rests merely upon the extraordinary. Consequently, He challenges the nobleman to believe His word *before* confirming that the miracle had actually occurred. The nobleman responds and his growing faith is rewarded.

1. Galilee encompassed the land of what two Israelite tribes?

2. This miracle demonstrates Jesus' ability to heal in spite of what limitation?
3. What did the nobleman wish to know about his son's recovery?

## 2. Jesus' First Permanent Disciples

(**Note:** Some place Luke's account of the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth next [Lk 4:16-31] and then apply Matthew and Mark's accounts to a second rejection at the end of the Galilean ministry. We will discuss this event at a later time.)

*//Texts:* Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; **Lk 5:1-11**. Peter, Andrew, James and John are called to leave their secular occupations and accompany Jesus full-time. While the accounts seem somewhat abrupt, we must remember that these men have known Jesus for about a year now. They have seen His miracles, heard His teaching and joined Him upon occasion in His work. Thus they were prepared when Jesus "drafted" them. Only Luke tells of the teaching of the multitudes from the boat and the great catch of fish after an unsuccessful night of fishing.

4. Describe Peter's reaction when the fish were caught.
5. How did Jesus respond to Peter's statement?

## 3. Events at Capernaum

Capernaum was a city of some significance, located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee not far from the entry point of the Jordan River. Capernaum became Jesus' "home base" during the Galilean ministry and was the site of several miracles. In spite of the great witness of Jesus here, the city remained mostly unbelieving (Mt 11:23).

Jesus teaches in the synagogue at Capernaum and casts a demon out of the man in the assembly (*//Texts:* **Mk 1:21-28**; Lk 4:31-37). The phenomenon of demon possession is not fully explained in the Scriptures. Apparently, it was a dispensational occurrence and served to visibly demonstrate the superiority of heaven's messenger (Jesus) over hell's agents. The NT shows that the Jews tried to deal with this affliction on their own (see Lk 11:19), but there is no evidence for successful exorcism apart from miraculous endowments from God (Mt 10:1; Mk 16:17; Ac 19:13-17).

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus and His four disciples come to Peter's house where He heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (*//Texts:* Mt 8:14-17; Mk 1:29-34; **Lk 4:38-41**). Later in the evening many others ("*the whole city*" – Mk 1:33) come to Jesus for healing.

6. What astonished the people in addition to Jesus miracles (Mk 1:22, 27)?
7. What were the demons saying about Jesus? How did Jesus restrict them?
8. How does Matthew tie these events to OT prophecy?

## 4. Jesus' First Extensive Tour of Galilee

*//Texts: Mt 4:23-25; Mk 1:35-39; Lk 4:42-44.* The next morning, Jesus and His disciples leave Capernaum to preach in other towns throughout Galilee. With news of such amazing powers spreading fast, it would have been easy for Jesus to remain in one place and let the people come to Him. But He is aggressive and takes the message to the people – even as others in Capernaum are still seeking Him. Jesus’ fame now reaches beyond the borders of Galilee and great multitudes are beginning to congregate. This explains why Jesus cautions the healed leper “*see that you say nothing to anyone*” and will likewise advise other exuberant beneficiaries of His healing power (*//Texts: Mt 8:2-4; Mk 1:40-45; Lk 5:12-16*).

9. What had Jesus done early on this morning? What does Jesus do more frequently as the demand upon Him increases (Lk 5:16)?
10. List the various places from which people came to be healed by Jesus.

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

### **Lesson 4: The Galilean Ministry (2)**

#### **1. Jesus Returns to Capernaum; Criticism Begins**

*//Texts: Mt 9:2-8; Mk 2:3-12; Lk 5:17-26.* Jesus’ fame has now attracted the attention of the Pharisees who begin to investigate Him. When Jesus tells the paralytic, “*your sins are forgiven you,*” they are shocked but reluctant to openly charge Him with blasphemy. But Jesus brings their thoughts out into the open and challenges their conclusion by physically healing the man. This subtle episode marks the beginning of hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees. More criticism follows at the feast given for Jesus by His newly called disciple, Matthew, on the basis of His social contact with the lower classes (*//Texts: Mt 9:9-17; Mk 2:13-22; Lk 5:27-39*). Again, the Pharisees are somewhat timid as they direct their comments to the disciples instead of Jesus, Himself. In both cases the Pharisees demonstrate a legalistic snobbery that fails to consider the spiritual needs of others and consequently the true nature of Jesus.

1. From where have Pharisees come to investigate Jesus?
2. What are the occupations of the five disciples now formally called by the Lord?
3. What question is on the mind of John’s disciples? Who is the bridegroom?

#### **2. The Feast in Jerusalem**



The gospel of John concentrates upon several great miracles of Jesus, most of which occur in and around Jerusalem. John 5 relates a visit of Jesus to Jerusalem for one of the feasts and documents the growing hostility of the Jews toward Him. During the feast, Jesus heals a man of a long-standing illness but is attacked by the Pharisees for doing so on the Sabbath (Jn 5:9-10, 16). When Jesus refers to God as “My Father,” *“the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God”* (5:18). Jesus proceeds to confront the Pharisees on a number of significant points: 1) that life and judgment belong to the Son (5:21-22); 2) that they did not have God’s words abiding in them and actually rejected the teaching of Moses (5:38, 46-47); 3) that they are more interested in receiving honor and praise from men than from God (5:44). Jesus thus clearly draws the battle lines between Himself and the Pharisees which will eventually result in His death.

4. Look carefully at Jn 5:12. What was NOT mentioned in the Pharisees’ question?

5. Where could instruction about Jesus be found (Jn 5:39, 46)?

### 3. Two More Sabbath Controversies

*//Texts: Mt 12:1-14; Mk 2:23-3:6; Lk 6:1-11.* In these episodes, Jesus gives the correct interpretation of the Sabbath law, being “Lord of the Sabbath,” and exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who would rescue a sheep on the Sabbath but object to the effortless healing of a man. After their humiliation by Jesus in the synagogue, the livid Pharisees ally with their hated political rivals, the Herodians, in the common cause of seeking Jesus’ death (Mk 3:6). Note the scrutiny under which Jesus is now living.

6. What does Jesus mean in Mk 2:27? What had the Pharisees done to the Sabbath?

7. How was Jesus feeling as He looked upon the Pharisees in the synagogue (Mk 3:5)?

### 3. More Healing by the Sea of Galilee

*//Texts: Mt 12:15-21; Mk 3:7-12.* Even as the political elite are plotting Jesus’ murder, the common people are swarming to Him to hear His words and receive His compassionate healing. So exuberant are the crowds that Jesus keeps a small boat near-by to escape the crush if need be. These same crowds, however, will eventually forsake Him and lose interest after gaining what they desperately desired from Him.

8. According to Matthew’s quote of Isaiah, what is Jesus not seeking? What does He thus tell the people who are receiving the healing?

9. List again the places from which people are coming for healing.

### 4. The Selection of the Twelve Apostles

*//Texts: Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16.* Before taking a most crucial step that will affect the future of His kingdom upon the earth – the selection of His ambassadors and first preachers of the gospel – Jesus spends a night in prayer. Besides Peter, Andrew, James and John, there are others called

“His disciples” who apparently have shown more than passing interest in Jesus. From these adherents Jesus selects twelve men who will receive special training and a commission that, if they had presently known of it, would likely have paralyzed them with fear. Their training will be gradual and commensurate with their growing faith.

10. What feature is noted of Judas from his first mention in the Scriptures?

11. Where is Jesus when He makes this selection?

*(Remember: When parallel texts [//Texts] are cited, the one(s) in bold are the principal study references. You may read the others as you desire.)*

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 5: The Galilean Ministry (3)**

#### **1. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount**

*//Texts: Mt 5-7, Lk 6:17-49.* This discourse of Jesus is the longest recorded and pre-sents a broad though not completely detailed description of the kingdom which He is presently establishing. Jesus was not merely a “miracle-worker”; He was a teacher who astonished His hearers “*for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Mt 7:28-29). Jesus challenges the entrenched Jewish power structures by calling men to a higher standard than that which rested upon Jewish tradition and Pharisaic hypocrisy. His teaching was truly revolutionary both in His day and in our own time.

Jesus begins by pronouncing heaven’s blessings upon certain aspects of character and attitude (Mt 5:1-10). He then anticipates the persecution which will inevitably result when righteousness clashes with an evil environment (5:10-12) and then exhorts His disciples to be courageous in the face of opposition: “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*” (5:13-16).

1. What would the OT prophets and Jesus’ disciples have in common (Mt 5:12)?

2. Who is glorified when a Christian lives righteously before men?

#### **2. Jesus’ Commentary on Current Teaching**

Jesus of course knew that battling the corruptions of the Law of Moses and restoring its true meaning would result in the charge of heresy. Consequently He affirms the viability of the Law “*till all is fulfilled*” (Mt 5:17-19). But more shocking is this statement: “*I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*” Such a bold, ambitious claim was either doomed to failure or destined to succeed. The next part of the discourse (Mt 5:20-48) is a series of contrasts between “*You have heard that it was said ...*” (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) and “*But I say to you ...*”. In this teaching

Jesus calls His followers to moral and ethical standards which include the absence of malice, lust and vengeance, honoring marital and verbal commitments, and seeking the good of all friend or foe. In such godly living, Jesus' disciples would exceed the righteousness of the current Jewish leadership (5:20).

3. What does *"an eye for an eye"* behavior result in?

4. Did the OT teach Jews to hate their enemies? Cite a passage for your answer.

### **3. Serving Two Masters**

In Mt 6 Jesus focuses upon one's motives for religious service and stresses the truth that *"no one can serve two masters ..."* (Mt 6:1-24). Again Jesus teaches by contrast; He encourages more genuine motives than the "hypocrites" who offer charity, prayer and fasting to be admired by men rather than to please God and share in His nature (Mt 6:2, 5, 16). Such men serve the god of ego; thus, when their ego is stroked, *"they have their reward"* (ibid). Jesus further gives instructions on how to pray to the God who really listens and cares (Mt 6:7-15). Such prayers should be humble and simple, filled with praise and thanksgiving and petitions for divine blessings.

5. Which aspect of Jesus' model prayer does He single out for further comment?

6. What is a good indicator of where the affections of our heart are set (Mt 6:19-21)?

### **4. The Distraction of Earthly Worries**

Those who serve the masters of materialism and worldly approval will inevitably suffer from anxiety (Mt 6:25-34). People are fickle and their praise is fleeting; many elements of life are beyond our control or influence; and no one can know what tomorrow holds. These aspects of earthly life can drive us crazy with anxiety if we allow them to dominate our thinking. Jesus thus counsels His disciples to *"not worry about your life"* but rather *"seek first the kingdom of God ... and all these things shall be added to you."*

7. What lessons can be learned from the birds of the air and lilies of the field?

8. Those who constantly worry are people of little \_\_\_\_\_.

9. Why should we not worry about tomorrow's troubles today?

### **5. The Path to the Heavenly Kingdom**

Several warnings and admonitions concerning one's journey toward heaven are given at the close of the discourse (Mt 7:7-29). Jesus first emphasizes a diligent search for the blessings of God with the assurance that God is a good and benevolent Father who is ready and willing to help (7:7-11). Jesus affirms that which is denied by many – that the way to heaven is narrow and few people will find it; conversely, the way of destruction is broad and well-populated (7:13-14). The reason for this is then given: false prophets will lead people astray (7:15-20) and true obedience to God is rare (7:21-23). Jesus connects "hearing" and "doing" His words with

building a house which will endure (7: 24-27). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly places *Himself* – devotion to Him personally and conformity to His teaching – between man and eternal salvation. Such forth-rightness challenged His hearers then and continues to put all men to the test today.

10. How does Jesus summarize the Law and Prophets?

11. T/F False prophets will always be obvious by their lack of sincerity.

12. If apparently sincere people will be lost, how can we confidently expect salvation?

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### **Lesson 6: The Galilean Ministry (4)**

#### **1. The Centurion's Servant Healed**

*//Texts:* Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10. Luke's gospel includes more of Jesus' interaction with Gentiles than the other gospels. In this encounter, Jesus is amazed at the faith of a Ro-man centurion who is both humble and confident of Jesus' power. Jesus makes two comments concerning this Gentile's faith: 1) It surpassed anything He had seen among the Jews, and 2) It foreshadowed the coming influx of Gentiles into the kingdom and the exclusion of many Jews (Mt 8:11-12). Jesus rewards his faith by healing his servant.

1. To what aspect of the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob does Jesus refer when He speaks of the centurion's faith?

2. Who interceded for the centurion before Jesus? Why did they help?

#### **2. Resurrection of the Widow's Son**

On the very next day (NKJ), Jesus travels to Nain accompanied (hampered) by a large crowd (Lk 7:11-17). He meets a funeral procession coming out of the city and, moved by the grief of this widow over the death of her only son, restores his life. Naturally, news of such an event spreads quickly even to distant Judea. This is the first of three resurrections performed by Jesus during His ministry.

3. What details suggest that this was not a merely a case of natural recovery from coma?

4. What conclusion did the people reach on account of this miracle?

#### **3. Messengers from the Imprisoned John**

*//Texts:* Mt 11:2-15; Lk 7:18-28. The great prophet John, his work of preparation complete and his life ebbing away in Herod's prison, sends to Jesus for reassurance and comfort (Mt 11:2-6). Jesus responds not with a direct affirmation but a necessary implication (11:4-5). John was expected to infer Jesus' true identity from the works He performed. Jesus praises John's

prophetic work (11:7-15): “... among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” What a testimony to this man by the Lord! Yet from John we learn a valuable lesson: discouragement can afflict anyone under the right circumstances. We must continually review our beliefs and the basis for them and reconfirm our confidence in the Lord.

5. Why was John the greatest prophet of all?

6. In what way was he “Elijah who is to come”?

#### **4. A Growing Climate of Unbelief**

*//Texts: Mt 11:16-30; Lk 7:29-35.* In spite of John’s faithful witness and preaching, his message had been rejected by the Jewish leadership (Lk 7:29-30). This same class was now opposing Jesus on opposite grounds to that of John: “*Look, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*” (Mt 11:16-19). Unbelief remains strong among the cities of eastern Galilee which had by now seen so many of His works – Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (11:20-24). If John was expected to believe mere-ly upon the secondhand *report* of His works, how much more so these cities where Jesus actually walked and taught! In spite of the gathering clouds of resistance Jesus extends a universal invitation to sin-laden people to come to Him for rest (11:25-30).

7. How were the Jews behaving like children?

8. What reputation did Jesus have among the Pharisees? Can we *always* avoid having a questionable reputation?

9. In what sense was Tyre, Sidon and even Sodom greater than the Galilean cities listed?

#### **5. In the Home of Simon the Pharisee**

The attitude of the Pharisees toward Jesus and their fellow man is well illustrated by a story from Luke’s gospel (Lk 7:36-50). Jesus is invited into the home of Simon but is shown none of the common courtesies of the day (7:44-46), thus indicating that Simon’s motives in extending hospitality to Jesus were less than honorable. During the meal an uninvited woman – a “sinner” – intrudes and begins to honor Jesus from the depths of her grief. Simon attributes his own self-righteous standards to Jesus and wonders to himself why a prophet would allow such a woman to touch Him. Jesus proceeds to teach Simon a lesson on love and forgiveness. The Pharisees lacked a sense of guilt or spiritual need; they constantly compared themselves to the “tax-collectors and sinners” and felt fully justified before God. Therefore, when Jesus extended spiritual restoration to them, they were uninterested – even insulted. Thus Jesus says of them, “*But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little*” (7:47).

10. What were the common customs of receiving guests in Jesus’ day?

11. What kind of healing does Jesus grant this woman?

12. What had she demonstrated in seeking Jesus and honoring Him in this fashion?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 7: The Galilean Ministry (5)**

#### **1. A Second Extensive Tour of Galilee**

Jesus again travels throughout Galilee “*bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*” (Lk 8:1-3). Luke explains that He is accompanied by “the twelve,” now an established and recognized group apart from the multitude of disciples, and financially supported in part by certain women to whom He had been a blessing.

1. What is noteworthy about Mary Magdalene? About Joanna?

#### **2. Jesus: Ally of Beelzebub?**

The remainder of this lesson refers to a single day’s activities in and near Capernaum. Jesus is wildly popular among the multitudes even as opposition from the Pharisees takes on a meaner edge. // *Texts:* Mt 12:22-37; Mk 3:19-30; **Lk 11:14-23**. The crowds are now so thick that Jesus and His disciples have no time nor room to eat (Mk 3:20); and His family cannot get through to meet with Him (Lk 8:19). As Jesus casts out a demon, the accusation is made against Him that in doing so He is exercising the power of the devil rather than the power of God. Others dare to ask a sign from heaven even as He is performing one. Jesus shows the irrationality of their response and calls upon them to decide whose side they are going to be on (Lk 11:23). Jesus scolds His hearers as “*an evil generation*” preoccupied with titillating signs (Lk 11:29-32).

2. What did Jesus know about His accusers?

3. What did the casting out of demons prove about the kingdom?

4. What sign will be given to these people?

#### **3. Rebuking and Teaching**

Jesus now “takes the gloves off” and assails the Pharisees and lawyers for their inward corruption and hypocrisy, their rejection of God’s spokesmen and for hindering others from entering the kingdom (Lk 11:37-54). This results in increased efforts to confound Jesus and catch Him in some inconsistency. Luke 12:1-13:9 contains a variety of sub-jects touched on by Jesus on this occasion: the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (12:1-3), the fear of God (12:4-7), the confession of His name (12:8-12), materialism (12:13-34), faithfulness and watchfulness (12:35-48), conflict between forces of righteousness and evil (12:49-59), repentance and the bearing of good fruit (13:1-9). Some things are specially directed to His disciples (12:1, 22), others are for the benefit of the multitudes (12:54). Some things are said in response to comments from the

crowd (12:13), others in response to criticism of His actions (11:38). This discourse represents how Jesus was trying to bring men to a higher spiritual plane in preparation for His coming kingdom.

5. What were the lawyers taking away from the people (Lk 11:52)?

6. Those who would fight over estates of the deceased should beware what vice?

7. How is Jesus feeling as opposition to Him is increasing (Lk 12:50)?

#### **4. The Parables of the Kingdom**

The crowd pressing around Jesus is so great that He gets in a boat and teaches the multi-tudes from off-shore (Mt 13:1-2). Jesus uses a variety of parables to illustrate the nature of the kingdom He has come to establish. He apparently speaks five parables from the boat: the sower (**Mt 13:3-9**; Mk 4:3-9; Lk 8:4-8), growth of the seed (Mk 4:26-29), the tares (Mt 13:24-30), and the mustard seed and leaven (**Mt 13:31-33**; Mk 4:30-32).

Jesus then returns to a house with His disciples and teaches them further. The explanation of the sower and tares is given (Mt 13:10-23, 36-43) followed by the parables of the treasure, pearl and net (Mt 13:44-52).

Jesus explains to His disciples that He is now teaching in parables because “*seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand*” (Mt 13:10-17). The people, intellectually dulled by the traditions, interpretations and assumptions of the scribes and Pharisees, could not accept the plain, forthright teaching of the Lord. (Remember the rebuke to Nicodemus? “*Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things ... If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*” – Jn 3:10, 12). Jesus is reduced to telling simple stories in order to convey certain truths to spiritual simpletons. Jesus resorted to them out of the intellectual dullness of the people, not because they were more effective or entertaining than directly delivered information. The simplicity of Jesus’ teaching should not become the pretext for Christians today being satisfied with the milk of the word only. Spiritually healthy people crave more depth and insight into the word of God.

8. What did many prophets and righteous men of old desire to see and hear?

9. Describe the tares. Who sowed them? What will happen to them?

#### **5. Jesus Stills the Storm**

**//Texts:** Mt 8:18-27; **Mk 4:35-41**; Lk 8:22-25. At the end of this long, exhausting day, Jesus sets sail with His disciples to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. During the voyage a tempest arises and threatens to capsize the boat. The disciples, experienced fishermen, were in a panic while the carpenter was in a peaceful sleep. When finally roused, Jesus merely speaks the storm into submission. This is another piece of the puzzle of faith for the disciples. It is becoming increasingly clear that their Teacher is something other than a mere prophet. His true identity will become clearer as time goes on.

10. What condition of heart causes fear?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 8: The Galilean Ministry (6)**

#### **1. Healing the Demoniacs in Gergesa**

*//Texts:* Mt 8:28-34; **Mk 5:1-20**; Lk 8:26-40. Demon possession is not explained in detail in the Scriptures. The various episodes of exorcism give clues of the phenomenon but they also raise questions impossible to answer. When Jesus and His disciples disembark on the eastern shore of Galilee, they are accosted by two demon-possessed men. Mark describes their utter misery of life, contrasting Satan's wishes for men and God's benevolent desires. Note that demon possession is distinguished from organic or mental disease as these men are inhabited by a plurality of spiritual beings who speak, reason, recognize Jesus and acknowledge His power, possess super-human knowledge and state preferences (Mk 5:7-13). When Jesus permits the demons to enter the herd of swine, the pigs act in similar fashion to the men previously possessed. When news of the herd's loss reaches the men of Gergesa, they are fearful rather than humbled or inquisitive and ask Jesus to depart from them.

1. When a man is in his "right mind," how does he appear in public (Mk 5:15; Lk 8:27)?
2. Where did the demons not want to go (Lk 8:31)?
3. What did the healed man request of Jesus? What did Jesus tell him?

#### **2. Healing of the Bleeding Woman**

*//Texts:* Mt 9:18-26; Mk 5:22-43; **Lk 8:40-56**. After having crossed the Sea of Galilee back to the western side, Jesus is approached by Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue (probably in Capernaum), with a request to revive his daughter. Jesus' popularity has not yet diminished for He is pressed and jostled by the masses with His every step. As He proceeds to Jairus' house, He is touched by an ailing woman who is immediately cured without any overt action by Jesus. Jesus asks her to identify herself, whereupon she explains to Him and the onlookers what had happened. Jesus praises her high degree of faith.

4. Who mildly rebukes Jesus for inquiring who touched Him?
5. How did the woman feel when Jesus asked about her identity (Mk 5:33; Lk 8:47)?

#### **3. Jairus' Daughter Raised**

As Jesus commends and comforts the healed woman, word comes to Jairus that his daughter has died. Jesus counters this distressing news with the promise that she will yet be cured. Arriving at Jairus' house, Jesus separates Peter, James and John from the other disciples and allows them to witness the resurrection firsthand. This is the first of several events in which these three will uniquely participate. Perhaps the Lord has a particular affinity for these three (we know that this is the case particularly with John), or maybe He is preparing them for a more difficult future than the other apostles (these three are certainly featured more prominently than the others both



during the ministry of Jesus and beyond, with James being the first apostle martyred). In the presence of these three and the girl's parents, Jesus, for the second time, restores life to the dead.

6. How is Jesus addressed in Lk 8:49?

7. How did the people react when Jesus said the girl was just sleeping? Why did they?

8. Why did Jesus tell the girl's parents the opposite of what he told the Gergesene man?

#### **4. Two Blind Men Healed**

Jesus is next approached by two blind men who appeal to Him for relief (Mt 9:27-31). Two things are of particular interest in this story. The first is the reference to Jesus as "Son of David." By this expression the men acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah of the OT in accordance with the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7 (see Mt 22:42; Is 11:1). Proph-ets spoke of the throne of David eventually being occupied by one of his descendants, but Jeremiah made it clear that this could not physically take place in Jerusalem (Jer 22:30). Gabriel had said to Mary "*the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David*" (Lk 1:32). The blind men acknowledge this connection.

Secondly, Jesus says to them, "*According to your faith let it be to you.*" He has said similar things to others (Lk 8:48; 7:50). It is true that men and women came to Jesus with trust and confidence in His healing power; it is **not** true that people had to possess a certain degree of faith for the healing power to work effectively. Jesus never failed to heal someone in need even though He acknowledged that many of that generation, even among His disciples, were "of little faith."

9. How did the blind men disobey Jesus?

#### **5. The Mute Demoniac Healed**

The healing of the mute demoniac further astounds the common people, but the Phari-sees continue their assault by connecting His works to the power of darkness (Mt 9:32-34). It is truly perplexing to consider the divergent convictions of the Jews when such divine power was clearly manifested. Truly, no external power can forcibly change the heart of a man against his will, for he will rationalize and resist until his own position is justified and protected.

10. What did the people say as they joyously beheld the miracles of Jesus?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 9: The Galilean Ministry (7)**

#### **1. At the Synagogue in Nazareth**

**//Texts:** Mt 13:54-58; Mk 6:1-6; **Lk 4:16-31.** Though Luke includes this story at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry the evidence suggests that it occurs near the end. It may be that Luke is setting a tone for his gospel: that Jesus' works and teaching initially met with wonder, then confusion and finally anger and rejection. Jesus returns to His hometown synagogue and is invited to read to the congregation (Lk 4:16-21). He selects a Messianic passage from Isaiah and proclaims "*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*" This gospel – good news (4:18) – should have caused the people to rejoice and be glad that not only had the Messiah come but He had been reared in their town. Unfortunately, their reaction will be quite different. Perhaps this obstinacy of the Nazarenes is part of the reason other Jews held them in such contempt (Jn 1:46).

1. What things did Isaiah say the Messiah would do when He came?

## **2. The Attempted Murder by the Nazarenes**

The atmosphere within the synagogue gradually disintegrates after Jesus' claim that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Him. The people at first seem puzzled that "Joseph's son" would make such an extravagant claim. Jesus anticipates their skepticism (Lk 4:23) and proceeds to cite two OT examples where greater faith was demonstrated outside of Israel than in it. Upon this rebuke, the Nazarenes are outraged and rush upon Him with the intent of throwing Him off a cliff. We have now witnessed the progressive opposition against Jesus from evil thoughts to veiled criticism to open argumentation and blasphemy and finally to attempted murder. Matthew notes that Jesus' work around Nazareth was scant due to their unbelief (Mt 13:58).

2. From where had the Nazarenes already heard about Jesus' mighty works?

3. What two OT episodes are cited to highlight the Nazarenes' unbelief?

4. T/F Mark says that Jesus worked no miracles at all in Nazareth.

## **3. Sending Out the Twelve**

**//Texts:** Mt 9:35-10:42; Mk 6:6-13; Lk 9:1-6. Jesus now steps up His efforts to shine the light of the kingdom throughout Galilee, perhaps because He knows the end of His work there is nearing. We are first told of a third tour of the area in which Jesus notes that "*the harvest truly is plentiful*" (Mt 9:35-38). He then "deputizes" the twelve and sends them out on their own "*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" On the one hand the disciples are equipped with miracle-working power (Mt 10:1); on the other hand Jesus tells them not to take money, extra clothes or other provisions (10:9-10). This would serve to teach them of their ultimate dependence upon God and would lay a foundation for the time when Jesus would not be physically present with them in the work. Of those who would reject His apostles Jesus commands "*shake the dust from off your feet.*" By this time, the entire region knew of Jesus and His mighty works and had ample evidence before them to make a judgment. Thus any city which still rejected the message of the kingdom would rank below Sodom and Gomorrah in the final judgment.

5. How did the apostles divide up when Jesus sent them out (Mk 6:7)?

6. T/F The apostles could work every miracle except raising the dead.

7. What general principle is stated about workers and applied to the apostles' work?

#### **4. The Future Lot of the Apostles**

Now that the apostles have been strengthened by their association with Him, Jesus begins to open their understanding about the future. He called them by saying, *"I will make you fishers of men"* (Mt 4:19), but now He begins to warn them that they will fish in the midst of storms (Mt 10:16-39). Jesus speaks of their betrayal by family and friends, trials before civil authorities and being *"hated by all."* In this Jesus notes *"a disciple is not above his teacher,"* thus hinting of His own gathering storms. He tells them to fear God more than man and admonishes them with a paradox: *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."* From this point on, the forces of hell will be unleashed upon the twelve and their Master. Will they withstand the test?

8. All those who will be saved must possess what characteristic (Mt 10:22)?

9. What will happen to all who deny Jesus?

10. What will the apostles need to help them complete their task (Mt 10:40-42)?

#### **5. The Death of John**

*//Texts:* Mt 14:1-12; **Mk 6:14-29**; Lk 9:7-9. What a shame it is that so vile and wretched a man as Herod Antipas is the instrument of John's execution. But such is the oft-puzzling providence of God. John demonstrated the spirit that the apostles must emulate: he stood up to an immoral, ungodly ruler and didn't compromise or keep silent. Surely this was a sad event for Jesus. His forerunner had been killed for the truth he brought. Jesus' own death would not be far behind.

11. What did Herod think when he heard stories being told about Jesus?

12. What factors weakened Herod's resolve to keep John alive?

### **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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#### **Lesson 10: The Galilean Ministry (8)**

##### **1. The Feeding of the Multitude**

*//Texts:* Mt 14:13-21; **Mk 6:30-44**; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14 (the only miracle recorded in all four gospels). The disciples return from their mission in need of rest and sail with Jesus to a quiet place across Galilee. The clamoring crowds, however, will not allow it and swarm like ants around the sea gathering again to Jesus. This presents an occasion for Jesus to work a miracle not for the benefit of one or two but *thousands*.

1. What does Jesus recognize about the mental and/or physical effects of labor?

2. How did Jesus react to this interruption of rest and relaxation?

## **2. The Return to Capernaum**

*//Texts: Mt 14:22-36; Mk 6:45-56; Jn 6:15-21.* During their return across the sea the disciples cross more than water; they cross a new horizon of faith which allows them to see Jesus in a different light. Mark tells us that even after the feeding of the multitude the disciples “*had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened*” (Mk 6:52). But after Jesus walks to them across the wind-blown waters and the gales sub-side, the twelve “*worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God’*” (Mt 14:33). Though the disciples had seen Jesus do some amazing things, including the stilling of a storm, there was something about this miracle that crystallized their understanding of Jesus’ divine nature. Upon their arrival at Gennesaret, Jesus and His companions are again besieged by the sick in search of relief.

3. Why did Jesus not accompany the disciples initially? What does this say about Him?

4. When did Peter begin to sink in the waves? What can we learn from this?

5. In what way were the people around Gennesaret healed?

## **3. A Confrontation Back in Capernaum**

Up till now Jesus has been wildly popular among the masses; the opposition has been mainly confined to the Jewish hierarchy. This, however, is about to change, oddly enough at the instigation of Jesus, Himself (Jn 6:22-40). Jesus is aware that the multi-tude’s interest in Him has been increasingly carnal. Thus when the crowds seek Him out upon His return to Capernaum Jesus says, “*you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*” He then forces the people to think deeply about their true interests by teaching them with difficult figurative language – the exact opposite approach from the parables formerly used. He presents Himself to them as the bread of life, and they respond much as did the Samaritan woman: “*Lord, give us this bread always*” (Jn 6:34; see 4:15). In spite of what the people had seen in Jesus, He declares they “*yet do not believe*” (Jn 6:36).

6. Why is the request of Jn 6:30-31 ridiculous? What had they seen the day before?

7. Where does Jesus say He came from?

8. What will Jesus do for true believers in the last day?

## **4. A Turning Point**

What happens next becomes a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus (Jn 6:41-71). The crowd begins to murmur at Jesus’ claim to be from heaven but Jesus challenges them to believe in Him on the basis of what they (should) have learned from the Father. Jesus urges His hearers to be different from their Jewish ancestors who ate the physical food of the wilderness but died in rebellion (6:32, 49, 58); they must not reject the heavenly bread being offered which brings everlasting life lest they eternally die. But their shallow minds cannot absorb what is being taught; the murmuring turns into open quarreling (Jn 6:52). Jesus presses further: “*Unless you*

*eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you ... Whoever eats My flesh ...he who feeds on Me ...”* (Jn 6:53-57). This is more than they can swallow. It is apparent that another miraculous meal is not forthcoming and Jesus is beginning to sound like a lunatic to the literal mind. So ... “*many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more*” (Jn 6:66). From this point the multitudes gradually thin out and opposition will increase.

9. What was a hurdle for people in both Nazareth and Capernaum (Jn 6:42; Lk 4:22)?

10. Jesus said His words were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (Jn 6:63).

11. After sinking in the sea the day before, how does Peter now redeem himself?

### **5. The Blasting of Unholy Tradition**

**//Texts:** Mt 15:1-20; Mk 7:1-23. When challenged about His disciples’ failure to wash according to rabbinical ritual, Jesus takes the offensive and blasts the hypocritical Pharisees for valuing their traditions above the Law itself. Jesus emphasizes that defilement begins in the heart, not in some violation of self-imposed regulations. When His disciples ask for a clarification of what He meant, He sharply rebukes their dullness of understanding (Mk 7:18). Note the difficulty which the apostles had in clearing their minds of Pharisaic influence and becoming receptive to unadulterated truth. May we all be duly warned by their example.

12. Where were these accusing Pharisees from?

13. From what major obligation were the Pharisees excusing themselves? How so?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 11: The Northern Retirement (1)**

#### **1. The Syro-Phoenician’s Daughter**

**//Texts:** Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30. Having done all He came to do and knowing that His time was drawing nearer, Jesus withdraws from the circus-like atmosphere in Galilee and travels with His disciples. They first head northwest to the region of Tyre and Sidon, but even there His fame will not allow Him any respite. Jesus is again approached for a healing favor, but the difference in this episode is how Jesus answers the request. Jesus first completely ignores the Canaanite woman. He then resists her on the grounds that she is not a Jew, but she is not put off by Him. Jesus then rebuffs her with a common slur of the day: “*It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.*” Even this does not deter the desperate woman; rather, she accepts the label and turns it into a humble request. This exchange serves to reveal the deeper character of the woman and to show His disciples that great faith exists outside of Israel. Their prejudices must be overcome if they are to be the universal ambassadors of the Lord.

1. How did the disciples react to this woman’s needs?

2. How does the woman refer to Jesus in Mt 15:22, 27?

## 2. Healing of the Deaf Stutterer

Jesus departs Phoenicia and, avoiding Galilee, skirts the Sea of Galilee into Decapolis. Decapolis was a region east and south of the Sea of Galilee and originally composed of ten Greek cities. Jesus' earlier visit to this region was disappointing, but now He heals a man of his hearing and speech impediments (Mk 7:31-37).

3. How did the people disobey Jesus?
4. What was their general assessment of Him?

## 3. Further Activities in Decapolis

As news of Jesus' presence in the region spreads the multitudes come for healing (Mt 15:29-31). Jesus responds as He always does – with tender compassion for people who are afflicted by physical and mental ills. The people have made an audience with Jesus their top priority – even above eating. Again, although He knows that many in the crowd are interested in Him only for what they can gain, Jesus feeds the hungry (Mt 15:32-38).

5. Compare Mt 14:19; 15:36 and 26:26. What was the significance of “breaking bread”? Was it of ceremonial significance or did it simply facilitate distribution of the pieces?

## 4. Confrontation in Magdala

*//Texts: Mt 15:39-16:4; Mk 8:10-12.* The instant Jesus steps foot back in Galilee, which He does in the city of Magdala on the western shore of the sea, the Pharisees and Sadducees together accost Him seeking a sign from heaven. This is the first time these two rival groups are mentioned together, indicating that their opposition to Jesus has become more deliberate and organized. Their harassment illustrates clearly why Jesus was now avoiding Galilee. Jesus is clearly distressed by their persistent unbelief: *“He sighed deeply in His spirit”* (Mk 8:12).

6. What application does Jesus draw from the weather concerning their blindness?

## 5. Back Across the Sea of Galilee

*//Texts: Mt 16:5-12; Mk 8:13-26.* On the voyage back across the sea, Jesus takes the opportunity to again warn His disciples about coming persecution. He spoke to them of the “leaven” of these hypocritical, malicious men, but the apostles failed to catch His drift. They were thinking in literal terms and wondered if He was criticizing them for failing to provide food for the journey. Jesus seems completely exasperated with His disciples: *“Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?”* If not for His divine knowledge, one wonders if Jesus doesn't occasionally fret, “This is never going to work. These blockheads just aren't going to get it.”

There is both comfort and exhortation in this episode. First, we learn of the patience of Jesus with those who are slow to learn. These men had been with Jesus for a long time now, day in

and day out, listening to His speech and gaining a deeper insight into His teaching. Yet they still cannot recognize a figurative word when they hear it. The fault of misunderstanding does not always lie with the teacher; sometimes it lies in direct proportion to the thickness of the student's skull. Fortunately, the Lord is patient and willing to repeat lessons over and over again until we get the point. Secondly, this sets the example for us as teachers. While a point may be perfectly clear to us, it may be fuzzy to others. If we remember our own slowness to grasp a point, it will help us be patient with those who struggle time and time again to understand.

Upon His arrival in Bethsaida, Jesus heals a man of blindness. Note that Jesus used a variety of "techniques" in His healing – sometimes merely a verbal command, other times a touch or a prayer, and on this occasion His own saliva. Why the differences? Possibly to demonstrate that He was not hoodwinking or hypnotizing by a melodious voice, repetitive motion or other tricks which prey upon the mind.

7. Why should the disciples not have worried about a bread shortage?
8. What instruction was given to the healed man?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 12: The Northern Retirement (2)**

#### **1. Peter's Confession Near Caesarea Philippi**

*//Texts: Mt 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21.* Jesus again travels north from Galilee, this time to the region of Caesarea Philippi. Here, Jesus will begin to reveal more to His disciples of His deeper nature and the future that awaits Him. Jesus' first question and the disciples' answer reveals the general controversy surrounding His identity. But Peter's reply to His second question indicates a growing conviction within the apostles that Jesus is none other than God's own Son and the prophesied Messiah. Lest they misunderstand His intentions in sending the multitudes away, criticizing the Jewish rulers and remaining outside Judea and Galilee, Jesus affirms that a) He will build His church, b) No force, including death, would defeat His purpose, and c) Peter will have a significant role in establishing the kingdom of heaven upon the earth.

1. What was Jesus doing when the disciples came to him (Lk 9:18)?
2. From where did the evidence come which allowed Peter to draw his conclusion?
3. What items will be given to Peter for the purpose of binding and loosing?

#### **2. Jesus' Coming Death**

*//Texts: Mt 16:21-28; Mk 8:31-9:1; Lk 9:22-27.* "From that time Jesus began to show ...". His death and its attendant factors now becomes a regular topic of discussion and Peter's initial reluctance to accept it demonstrates the need for patient teaching. Before Peter can use the promised keys of the kingdom, he must reconcile the establishment of that kingdom with his

Master's death. Further, Peter will have to come to terms with his own death for the sake of the kingdom. Therefore, Jesus teaches the importance of self-denial and loyalty to Him at all costs.

4. What is Jesus teaching about future events in Jerusalem?
5. In His sharp rebuke to Peter, what does Jesus call him? What does Jesus mean?
6. How near is the kingdom (Mk 9:1)?

### **3. The Transfiguration**

*//Texts: Mt 17:1-13; Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36.* Peter, James and John are again privileged to witness something apart from the others. Accompanying Him to a high mountain, they see Him “transfigured” or altered in appearance and engaged in a conversation with Moses and Elijah. In his state of emotional excitement, Peter blurts out a suggestion which is swiftly rebuked by the voice of the Father from heaven. On the way down from the mountain, Jesus teaches regarding the prophecy of a coming Elijah. Jesus says it had happened already in the person of John the Baptist, but the Jewish leaders had missed it.

7. What rebuke does God give Peter? How do the apostles react to the Voice?
8. What was the subject of Jesus' discussion with Moses and Elijah (Lk 9:31)?
9. What do the disciples not yet grasp (Mk 9:10)?

### **4. Healing of the Demoniac Boy**

*//Texts: Mt 17:14-20; Mk 9:14-29; Lk 9:37-43.* Jesus descends the mountain of great encouragement into the valley of failure and controversy. The other disciples had been approached in Jesus' absence to help a man with his demon-possessed son. Apparently there were varying degrees of this phenomenon, and this was a particularly difficult case. Perhaps lacking confidence because the Lord was not with them, the apostles fail to exorcise the demon and the scribes are duly attacking them. As Jesus surveys the scene – the scribal vultures, the self-serving multitudes (who have again tracked Jesus down), the weak father, and His own unstable disciples – He utters His growing frustration: *“O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?”* Even God becomes exasperated with men and women who resist the opportunities given to them to develop spiritually. Jesus heals the boy with a simple word, but there is no evidence that such power brought the people to true belief.

10. How does the boy's father react to Jesus' question of his belief?

### **5. Brief Return to Galilee**

*//Texts: Mt 17:22-23; Mk 9:30-32; Lk 9:43-45.* Jesus returns to Galilee desiring to avoid bitter persecution or unbridled euphoria or both. Jesus continues His teaching on His rapidly approaching death but the disciples remain dull of hearing. Perhaps they sought some figurative meaning in His words; after all, Jesus had used figurative speech on many occasions and they had failed to catch His meaning. It must have been difficult for these men who had seen Jesus



flawlessly answer His critics, raise dead people, calm storms – demonstrate nothing but emotional, physical, intellectual and moral strength – to believe that He would actually, literally die. And perhaps they could not imagine life without Him; therefore, they simply hardened their hearts to what they were hearing. Everyone does that upon occasion. But ignoring the truth won't change it. Jesus is going to suffer an untimely death – soon – and the disciples must find the courage to face up to it.

11. Why did the disciples not ask Jesus for further clarification?

## **The Earthly Ministry of Jesus: A Harmony (Part 1)**

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### **Lesson 13: The Last Galilean Ministry**

#### **1. The Apostles Argue over Supremacy**

*//Texts:* Mt 18:1-5; **Mk 9:33-37**; Lk 9:46-48. On the way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum, an argument broke out among the apostles as to which of them would be appointed to the highest ranks in the kingdom. This was probably fueled by the witness-ing of the transfiguration by the three and the dismal failure by the nine in their absence. At any rate, such a discussion reveals a lack of understanding about the nature of the kingdom which is “at hand.” Jesus seeks to correct this by using a child as an object lesson in humility.

1. How did the disciples respond when Jesus asked them of their conversation? Why?
2. What did Jesus do with the little boy? What does it say about His character?

#### **2. The Disciples' Sectarian Attitude**

*//Texts:* Mt 18:6-14; **Mk 9:38-50**; Lk 9:49-50. Perhaps in an effort to turn the criticism of Jesus into praise, or possibly to inquire of the correctness of their action, John tells of a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. John says, “*We forbade him because he does not follow us.*” Whatever the intent in mentioning the episode, it earns further correction from Jesus. In teaching against sectarianism, Jesus does not advocate different practices and doctrines being advanced in His name. Rather, He forbids men to make judgments against others because they are not in the “right group.” The disciples did not consider the possibility that Jesus, unbeknownst to them, may have empowered someone else for a special purpose. They didn't question the man's power; they challenged him simply upon the basis that he was not in their inner circle. Pride, the same fault that led to the apostles' power dispute, also lies behind their sectarianism.

3. Compare and discuss Mk 9:40 and Mt 12:30.
4. What would be worse than drowning in the depths of the sea (Mk 9:42; Mt 18:6, 14)?

#### **3. Dealing with Uncorrected Sin**

Jesus teaches further on the subject of sin which will inevitably arise among believers. Specifically, He touches on sin of which the perpetrator will not repent (Mt 18:15-20). Jesus has spoken prospectively of His church (Mt 16:18); He now gives it punitive power. Christians are called to a high standard of fair and equitable treatment of each other. They are to maintain a pure and undefiled life. Thus, the outstanding sin of one against another cannot be overlooked. The victim is directed to seek the restoration of his brother privately, then with others. If this is unsuccessful, the church is enlisted to bring pressure upon the sinful party culminating in withdrawal of fellowship if necessary. In regard to such discipline, Jesus promises that those who act in accord with the expressed will of God would have His approval. These principles apply to assemblies of any size, many or few.

5. Why should this first step be taken (Mt 18:15)? Why is it so hard to do?

6. What responsibility do the witnesses and the church have toward the offender?

#### **4. The Obligation to Forgive**

Jesus' teaching in many ways creates great individual responsibility to do what is right. Jesus does not allow His followers to bear grudges, shift blame or let personal feelings interfere with acting properly. Even when one has been wronged numerous times, he is still obligated to forgive when such forgiveness is sought (Mt 18:21-35). Jesus impresses His point upon the disciples with a parable in which He compares the forgiveness we receive from God to the forgiveness we are obliged to offer others. And this forgiveness is no mere lip service, vocalizing one sentiment while harboring conflicting feelings in our heart. Nowhere is our faith more challenged than by acting in a godly fashion toward those who hurt us.

7. What does Mt 18:29 imply about the one who sins against us?

8. How should we view those who sin against us and are penitent (Mt 18:33)?

9. Where must our forgiveness of others be rooted (Mt 18:35)?

#### **5. The Temple Tax**

Peter receives further instruction concerning the divine nature of Jesus when he is confronted about Jesus' payment of the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27). This tax was the equivalent of two days' wages and was for the maintenance of the temple (Ex 30:13-16). When the tax-collectors question Peter about Jesus' intention to pay the tax, Peter quickly affirms that He will do so. His answer is right, but for the wrong reason. Jesus explains that, as the Son of the King, He is technically exempt from the tax. However, He understands that exercising this liberty will unnecessarily antagonize His opponents. Thus He uses His royal authority in producing the fee for both Peter and Himself.

10. List two miraculous elements in this story.

11. As a fisherman, the sea was Peter's domain. List three ways in which Jesus showed His mastery over the sea.

