



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 7 – Around the Sea of Galilee

The Sea of Galilee

This small freshwater lake has many names: Chinnereth, Gennesaret, the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias. It is 22.5 km (14 miles) long and 13 km (8 miles) wide at its widest point. Many fish live in it. At the time of Jesus, the chief industry of the towns along its shores was fishing. Figs, olives, dates, and pomegranates grow on the southern hills.

The following are some of the towns on the shore or near the shore of the Sea of Galilee:

Capernaum, Jesus' home for several years. A Gentile captain built a synagogue here. Jairus, whose daughter Jesus raised from the dead, was the ruler of this synagogue. Ruins of a later synagogue built in Capernaum can still be seen today.

Tiberias, the capital city of Herod Antipas, who killed John the Baptist. Tiberias was named for the Roman Emperor who was ruling when Jesus was crucified.

Bethsaida of Galilee, the fishing town, the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip.

Bethsaida on the other side of the Jordan River. Jesus fed the five thousand near this town.

Magdala, also called Magadan and Dalmanutha. It was the home of Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala), out of whom Jesus drove seven evil spirits. She was the first to see the risen Jesus on Easter Sunday.

Gergesa/Gerasa, on the eastern shore of the lake. Jesus healed the man with a legion of devils near this place by sending them into a herd of pigs.

Chorazin, near Capernaum, where many of Jesus' miracles took place.

Jesus later rebuked Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida for rejecting His words. Jesus spent most of His three or four years of ministry in and around these towns of Galilee.

Read the listed passages as you study each of the events below:

Wind and water obey Him (Matthew 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

In this story we see Jesus as both God and man in one person. He showed Himself to be man by falling asleep in the boat after a hard day's work, but He also proved Himself to be God by calming the winds and waves by His mere command. Surely only God can control nature in this way.

In the Nicene Creed we confess that Jesus is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.” In the same Nicene Creed we confess that this Jesus “was made man.”

In the Athanasian Creed we confess that “our Lord Jesus Christ ... is God and man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man ... Who, although he is God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.”

The Gerasenes/Gadarenes (Matthew 8:28 – 9:1; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

There were two men bodily possessed by devils, but one was more prominent. His name was Legion (a legion is a group of over six thousand soldiers). Jesus healed him by sending his devils into the pigs, who promptly rushed down to the Sea of Galilee and drowned. The residents of Gergesa were more concerned about the loss of their pigs than the health of their countryman, so they asked Jesus to leave. The healed man now became a missionary for Christ in the region of the Ten Towns (the Decapolis).

The daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56)

Jesus performed two miracles in this account: the raising of the girl from the dead and the healing of the woman with a flow of blood.

Notice what Jesus says about death: it is only a sleep. And so it is for the Christian, for the Christian’s body will rise to eternal life.

The bleeding woman was healed by touching Jesus’ clothing in faith. It is probable that Jesus generally wore the following pieces of clothing: a headgear (a kind of turban); sandals for His feet; an inner garment which fit closely and went down to His feet (this was without seam, woven from the top down as one piece, see John 19:23-24); a girdle (a belt); the square outer garment with the fringes on the four corners. It was probably one of these fringes (or tassels), that the diseased woman touched. When Jesus was crucified, the four soldiers divided the four cheaper garments among them, and cast lots for the more expensive inner garment, which they thought was too valuable to be torn into four pieces.

The raising of Jairus’ daughter is the second of the three recorded miracles of Jesus in which he raised someone from the dead.

Two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31)

Notice that Jesus gives the strange command that they should not tell others about their healing. Apparently Jesus did this so as not to attract such large crowds that He was hindered in His chief work of preaching the Gospel.

A mute man (Matthew 9:32-34)

Again the Pharisees accused Jesus of working miracles with the power of the devil.

Jesus’ last visit to Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6)

Do you remember what happened to Jesus in Nazareth when He preached His first sermon there? The people rejected him (see Lesson 4 ***Nazareth rejects Jesus*** – Luke 4:16-30; John 4:44). On this last visit to Nazareth His hometown people still rejected Him.

Pray for workers (Matthew 9:35-38; Mark 6:6)

Jesus traveled around to all the villages of Galilee, preaching and healing. The work was too much for one man alone. Other workers were needed. The same is true also today. Let us continue to pray for workers – Gospel preachers – to bring the Lord’s Word to all the countries of the world.

Jesus sends out the twelve (Matthew 10:1,5–11:1; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6)

The disciples (followers) become apostles (men sent out). They were sent out two by two into the country of Israel. Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus, was one of the twelve that was sent out.

Their message: the kingdom of heaven is here in Jesus.

Their activity: to preach and to heal.

Their equipment and provisions: almost nothing.

Their method: stay where they first find welcome. Leave when they are no longer welcome.

Their encouragement: the Spirit will speak through you. The hairs on your head are all counted.

Warnings: there will be persecution by mankind in general, by the Jews, even by family members.

Their reward: they will be confessed before Jesus’ Father in heaven.

Therefore: LET US TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOW CHRIST FOREVER.

Herod kills John (Matthew 14:5-12; Mark 6:19-29)

John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded at Machaerus, a fortified, hill-top fortress near the Dead Sea. Herod Antipas made the mistake of promising to do whatever the daughter of Herodias asked without knowing what that might be. But if we promise to do something evil, it is better to break the oath than to commit the evil.

Has John come back? (Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9)

Herod Antipas had a guilty conscience. He thought Jesus was really John, alive again.

Looking for rest (Matthew 14:13-14; Mark 6:30-34; Luke 9:10-11; John 6:1-2)

After the apostles returned from their mission, Jesus wanted them to take a rest, but this was impossible. When Jesus saw the crowds around Him, He simply had to help them, as always.

Jesus feeds five thousand (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:3-14)

Jesus provided for the physical needs of those who come to hear His Word. He first asked His disciples what to do with the crowds to test them. They failed the test. Then Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, and there were 12 baskets left.

Jesus walks on water (Matthew 14:22-34; Mark 6:45-53; John 6:15-21)

The people whom Jesus fed wanted to crown Him as their “Bread King”, but Jesus didn’t want this; it was not His mission to meet our earthly needs. Jesus sent His disciples across the lake, dismissed the crowd, and then prayed. The people’s desire to crown Him king was a temptation from Satan, and Jesus felt the need to prayer.

Later Jesus walked on the water towards the disciples, and even Peter walked on the water for a time. When Peter began to sink because of weakness of faith, Jesus rescued him. This is a good picture of the Christian’s spiritual situation in life.

Healings (Matthew 14:35-36; Mark 6:54-56)

Jesus is now on the western side of the Sea of Galilee and again a large crowd gathers around Him.

Bread from heaven (John 6:22-7:1)

Jesus rebukes the people for looking only for physical bread instead of the spiritual food He wants to give them. Jesus’ hard sayings about the absolute necessity of believing in Him turned away many of His followers, but the twelve remained faithful. Peter said to Jesus: **“You have the words of eternal life”** (John 6:68).

Eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking Jesus’ blood does not refer to the Lord’s Supper, which Jesus instituted later. Eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking Jesus’ blood refers to believing in Jesus and in Jesus’ sacrifice to take away our sin by His suffering and death (compare v. 54 with vv. 29, 40, and 47).

Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus from the fact that He fell asleep during a storm at sea?
2. Why did people of the regions of the Gerasenes ask Jesus to leave their country?
3. Why did Jesus say Jairus' dead daughter was sleeping?
4. How did the Pharisees try to explain away Jesus' amazing miracles?
5. How can we use Jesus' instructions to the twelve in our mission work today?
6. What can we learn from the beheading of John the Baptist?
7. Why might God have permitted John the Baptist to be beheaded?
8. Why did Jesus not allow Himself to be crowned as king after the feeding of the five thousand?
9. Why was Peter able to walk on water at first?
10. What did Jesus mean when He talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood?
11. How do we know that Jesus was not talking about the Lord's Supper when he talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood?
12. What were the hard sayings in Jesus' teaching in John chapter 6?