

## Jesus the Christ (5 BCE-30 CE)

### *Extensive Tour Throughout Galilee*

**Readings: Matthew 15:21-39; 16:1-12; Mark 7:24-37; 8:1-26**

### ***Reflections:***

- This entire section is about Israel not getting the truth about Jesus and the Gentiles getting it easily. From start to finish, Jesus is demonstrating that the people who understand his message, his own disciples, the religious leaders and Israel, for the most part just don't get it. On the other hand, Gentiles who have huge gaps of understanding and many obstacles get the truth of Jesus quickly and respond whole-heartedly.
- Canaanite woman pleads: Due to the growing crowds and increasing threat, Jesus increasingly seeks to avoid the public and yet people continue to discover his whereabouts. One of these women is a Gentile who pleads for the deliverance of her daughter. Jesus seems cold and indifferent at first but is this to simply reveal the woman's great faith? He says he is only sent to the lost sheep of Israel and yet he consistently demonstrates the great faith of key Gentiles to contrast Israel's overall lack of faith. This woman is another stark example of how those outside of Israel believe and receive Jesus and as a result experience the grace and power of God. In fact in this case Jesus says something that should offend and cause the woman to be outraged and yet only as we see the huge obstacle he puts in her way do we see how incredibly humble and trusting she was. He basically says, "I have just come to the lost sheep of Israel. Should the children's bread be thrown to the dogs?" Talk about insult. She replies, "But even the dogs get the crumbs." Touché! Jesus then affirms her boldly, "What great faith you have!" Her daughter is healed and we see another great example of how the most unlikely people (A Gentile woman) experience the kingdom while those you would expect to experience it (religious leaders) are left on the sidelines looking on.
- Deaf mute healed: Jesus now enters into a region of Gentiles. Did this woman prompt him to further demonstrate the way the Gentiles would respond to him? The first man Jesus heals is deaf and mute and would be completely isolated from community. Unable to speak or hear, he would be left completely isolated from people. In healing him, Jesus gets very close, touches his ears, and touches his tongue with a bit of his own saliva. Saliva was thought to have curative powers in that culture. Jesus was demonstrating his willingness to get close and was using symbolic touch as a way to publically demonstrate that he was

healing the man. The deep sign and call in Aramaic to “Be opened!” was again a clear demonstration that Jesus was healing him. The man is immediately healed and this again motivates all those around, despite Jesus’ request to keep it secret, to tell everyone they can. Jesus continues to heal the most broken in their midst and people praise the God of Israel. We see no opposition to Jesus and no attack of religious leaders. Here we see a foreshadowing of the incredibly positive response the Gentiles will have to the message of Jesus.

- Four thousand fed: We have a second occasion where Jesus miraculously feeds four thousand men and whoever else is with them. It appears that Jesus is doing this among the Gentiles and so this may be a parallel miracle to demonstrate how God will miraculously provide the “bread of life” to the Gentiles. Seven loaves and a few small fish (no number given) feed all those who are present and at the end they pick up seven baskets full of pieces. Seven is associated with divine completion and so we see here that Jesus is showing that God has sufficient grace and power to care for all the needs of all the Gentiles. Again what a great memory-maker for the disciples to hold on to until the day Paul and Barnabas are sent out as message carriers into the Roman world. Jesus then returns across the water to a very small town in Galilee, Dalmanutha (so small they have no record of it).
- Immediately Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders demanding a sign from heaven. What a huge contrast! Immediately the religious leaders are on Jesus and we see again how spiritually blind and deaf they are. Jesus basically says he won’t play that game. They can read the weather but they can’t see the obvious works of God right beneath their noses. Jesus says (in Matthew) that the only sign that will be given is the sign of Jonah. The story of Jonah in the Old Testament was about a prophet who did not grasp the mercy of God for the Gentiles while the Gentiles themselves welcomed the truth of God and experienced life change. The sign of Jonah is most likely a way to say that they as a nation are being rebuked by God for simply not getting it!
- Jesus then turns to his disciples and tries to warn them against the influence of the religious leaders. He says that they should guard against the yeast (sinful influence or teaching or approach) of the religious leaders. The disciples think Jesus is upset that they didn’t get enough bread. Again as the reader we are left wondering, how can these guys be so incredibly dense? How can they not understand what Jesus is talking about? That is the point exactly! Jesus has to clarify it again until the light goes on and they get what he is saying.
- Blind man near Bethsaida: Jesus then demonstrates what is happening through a healing. Jesus often used healings to powerfully illustrate spiritual truths. This blind man who can’t see anything is brought to Jesus for healing. Jesus again uses his own saliva and a touch of the man’s eyes to heal the man. After the first touch, Jesus asks the man what he can see. The man can only see large shapes with no detail. “I see people but they look like trees walking around.” Jesus touches the man again and then he sees everything clearly. What a clear illustration. Jesus’ disciples and many in Israel can only see in part. They know Jesus is

the Messiah but they still can't put it all together. How often today do we see the same thing? People can get part of the message and part of the truth but they can't spiritual perceive enough of the heart of God to really understand fully God's purposes. They live in this state of half in the kingdom and half out of it, getting part of it but failing to understand enough to really be able to enter into all God has for them. This passage gives us the hope that God wants everyone to see his truth clearly. It may take a second pass but God's heart is for everyone to come to a full understanding of all we have in Christ.