

# Harmony Of The Gospels -- Lesson #8

## The Special Training Of The Twelve Around Galilee

*Matthew 14:13-18:35; Mark 6:30-9:50; Luke 9:10-62; John 6:1-7:10*

### I. ***The First Withdrawal, The Twelve Return And Jesus Feeds The Five Thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14)***

- A. "When Jesus heard of it" refers to the death of John the Baptist. The excitement caused by this event and the efforts to use Jesus as a leader in a revolt, was enough reason for Jesus to withdraw Himself.
- B. Jesus probably set sail from near Capernaum to the narrow, secluded plain of El Batihah. Seeing Him start, the people followed Him by running along the shore, and were waiting for Him on the shore when He arrived.
- C. The time to seek lodging and provisions had passed and the multitude must act quickly. Jesus tested Philip to see which way he would turn in his weakness. The word translated "pennyworth" is the Roman denarius. Loaves were thin and small, like large crackers, and, around the sea of Galilee, the preserving of small fish was a thriving business.
- D. Considering the distance from any town, the women and children would not likely be numerous. They did not form a part of the count, for Eastern customs did not allow women to sit with men. They, with the children, would stand apart.
- E. They saw Jesus as the Messiah, the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15. Their desire to avenge the death of John made them anxious for the appearance of the Messiah. However, their faith was fickle.

### II. ***The Prevention Of The Purpose To Proclaim Jesus As King (Matthew 14:22-23; Mark 6:45-46; John 6:14-15)***

- A. Jesus had descended to the plain to feed the multitude, but, perceiving the mistaken desire of the people, He frustrated it by dismissing His disciples and going into the mountains.
- B. Mark records no reaction of the crowd to the multiplication of the loaves and fish, but there must have been one. The hurried departure of the disciples to Bethsaida suggests that there was danger of an uprising as a result of the miracle. Jesus stayed to dismiss the crowd and no doubt to calm the people down.
- C. The desire of the multitude to make Jesus king marks both the height of His popularity and the moment of decision for Him. They wanted someone to rule them who would feed them and guarantee their security; they had no comprehension of His spiritual mission or purpose.

D. The news of John's death, as one could imagine, would have saddened and frustrated Him. He needed the benefits of prayer. On three occasions in Mark's gospel Jesus withdrew to pray, and each time some sort of crisis was involved (1:35; 6:46; 14:32-36). He left as soon as He heard the news, but the people prevented Him until night.

**III. *The Peril To The Twelve In The Storm At Sea And Christ's Coming To Them On The Water (Matthew 14:24-33; Mark 6:47-52; John 6:16-21)***

- A. The Romans divided the night into four watches, and the fourth watch would have been from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. The disciples of Jesus learned that He knew their distresses and desired to deliver them.
- B. For the disciples, there would have been no mistaking His voice (cf. Genesis 27:22; 1 Samuel 26:17; Acts 12:14). The scene agrees with the character of Peter, who had a rash willingness to go into danger, and a lack of steadfastness to hold out through it. Fear is a source of doubt and an enemy of faith. Anyone who wants to achieve the victories of faith must overcome their fear.
- C. The disciples showed the hardness of their hearts in that the working of one miracle did not prepare them either to expect or to comprehend any other miracle which followed. They should have worshiped Jesus as the Son of God when they saw the five thousand fed, but they did not.

**IV. *The Reception At Gennesaret (Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56)***

- A. The land of Gennesaret was a plain at the western side of the lake of Galilee. Though the apostles had started their boat toward Capernaum, the storm appears to have deflected their course.
- B. The language of the text suggests that they probably came to land at the south end of the plain, somewhere near Magdala, and made a circuit of the cities in the plain of Gennesaret on their way to Capernaum.
- C. Because He did not stop in these cities, the sick were laid in the street so they might touch Him when He passed through. The story of the woman who touched the hem of His garment had evidently spread.

**V. *The Collapse Of The Galilean Campaign (John 6:22-71)***

- A. The people did not seek Him because they saw in Him a divine Friend who could satisfy the deep needs of the soul, but as a miracle-worker who could fill their bodies with food when the occasion required.
- B. The people desired to know what they must do in order to earn the abiding food. Belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the all-inclusive work which pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus will reiterate this truth several times in this discourse.

- C. The people respond similarly to the woman at the well in John 4. In answer to each set of questions Jesus revealed more of Himself, and showed that the blessings sought were within Him and were obtained by faith in Him. When Jesus had done this with the woman, she believe in Him; these Jews at Capernaum disbelieved and murmured. They were self-satisfied, and felt that they had displayed great wisdom in arriving at their decision. Jesus strikes at their pride by informing them that they are not His because God has rejected them as unworthy to be given to Him.
- D. The Father had given them the law as a tutor to draw them to Christ (Galatians 3:24), and He had also sent forth His prophets for the same purpose. Those who had availed themselves of this instruction, and had learned the Father's lesson, were ready to come to Christ.
- E. Jesus, the spiritual bread, is assimilated, not by eating, but by believing on Him. However, He was not yet perfected as the bread of life. The flesh, to be eaten, must be broken, and the blood, if it is to be drunk, must be poured out.
- F. The people who were drawn to Him by mistaken notions would leave as soon as they discovered that their conceptions of Him were incorrect. Judas would be a sad illustration of the truth that no man could be a real follower of Jesus unless he became such by the drawing of the Father.

**VI. *Pharisees From Jerusalem Reproach Jesus (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; John 7:1)***

- A. John had told us in chapter six that the Passover was near. He here makes a general statement which shows that Jesus did not attend this Passover. The reason for His absence is given in John 5:18.
- B. The Pharisees believed that traditions, or oral expositions of and additions to the law, were revealed to Moses along with the law, and were communicated by him orally to the elders of the people. They regarded these traditions as equal in authority with the written word.
- C. The Pharisees coming from Jerusalem could find nothing wherein Jesus or His disciples transgressed the law, so they accused Him of transgressing this tradition. Jesus does not deny their charge, but justifies His disciples by attacking the whole traditional system.
- D. The Pharisees taught that a son could say of the part of his estate by which his parents might it profited, "It is a gift;" that is, a gift of God, and by dedicating that part to God he would free himself from his obligation to his parents. Hence, their tradition undid the law.
- E. Jesus showed them that their ceremonial cleanness, which was founded on tradition, and in which they prided themselves, was worth-

less in comparison with the moral cleanness required by God's law, which they had ignored.

- F. Jesus set forth the simple doctrine that a man's moral and spiritual state is not dependent upon the symbolic uncleanness of his physical diet, much less is it dependent on ceremonial observances.

**VII. *The Second Withdrawal To The Region Of Tyre And Sidon (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)***

- A. This journey is differentiated because it differs from any previously recorded, for it was the first time that Jesus ever entered a heathen country. Jesus withdrew to escape the opposition of His enemies.
- B. The title "Son of David" shows that the Jewish hopes had spread to surrounding nations and that some, like this woman and the one at Jacob's well, expected to share in the Messianic blessings.
- C. The Greek conquest had diffused Greek civilization throughout western Asia to the point that the word "Greek" among the Jews had become synonymous with Gentile. The term "Syrophoenician" distinguished the Phoenicians from the other Syrians.
- D. By the use of the word "first" Jesus suggested that there would come a time of mercy for the Gentiles. This woman illustrates the principle that men should pray and not faint (Luke 18:1-8). It is noteworthy that the two most notable for their faith -- this woman and the centurion -- were both Gentiles.

**VIII. *The Third Withdrawal Through Phoenicia and Decapolis (Matthew 15:29-38; Mark 7:31-8:9)***

- A. From Tyre Jesus proceeded northward to Sidon and then eastward across the mountains and the headwaters of the Jordan to the region of Damascus. Here He turned southward and approached the Sea of Galilee on its eastern side.
- B. Jesus gave the deaf man a sign indicating His intention to heal him, whereas in other cases He would indicate the same by words. Jesus here, as in the healing of Jarius' daughter, spoke in Aramaic. He wanted the man to keep quiet because He was trying to avoid the multitude.
- C. When feeding the five thousand, the disciples had come with suggestions to Jesus. Now, being taught by experience, they keep silent and let Jesus manage as He sees fit. The failure to expect a miracle, despite previous experience, was a common occurrence in the history of Israel and of the twelve.
- D. As before, those who ate are all satisfied, and the men only are numbered. The whole crowd may have exceeded ten thousand.

**IX. *The Brief Visit To Magdala And The Attack By The Pharisees And Sadducees (Matthew 15:39-16:4; Mark 8:10-12)***

- A. Magdala was probably on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked for a sign from heaven and Jesus was deeply grieved at the stubbornness which demanded signs in the midst of overwhelming demonstrations of His divine power.
- B. Jesus' point here is clear: the Pharisees and Sadducees can read the "signs" that predict weather, but they remain oblivious to the "signs of the times" already happening. These signs testify to Jesus and the kingdom now dawning (cf. 11:4-6; 12:28). It was useless to bestow new signs upon those who are blind as to the signs already existing.
- C. The resurrection was a sign from heaven in the sense in which they used the word; that is, it was worked directly by God and not through man.

**X. *The Fourth Withdrawal To Bethsaida And The Rebuke Of The Disciples (Matthew 16:5-12; Mark 8:13-26)***

- A. Jesus left His opponents and withdrew by boat to the other side of the lake. This is Jesus' last and most important withdrawal from Galilee before His final trip south.
- B. Leaven was a symbol of secret, penetrating, pervasive influence, usually of a corrupting nature. Jesus' charge against the disciples ran deep. He had already denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees for their particular "teaching" that demanded manipulative signs and for their unbelief in spite of the bountiful evidence already supplied.
- C. Now the disciples are perilously close to the same unbelief in Jesus' person and miracles. The miracles Jesus performs, unlike the signs the Pharisees demand, do not compel faith; but those with faith will perceive their significance.
- D. The "Bethsaida" mentioned here is not the town close to Capernaum, but Bethsaida Julias, a town on the east side of the Jordan, near where it flows into the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was proceeding north toward Caesarea Philippi.
- E. Two points seem clear: (1) the man had probably not been born blind or else he would not have been able to identify trees as trees, and (2) the return of his sight was gradual. Jesus healed gradually in this case probably to prove that He had full liberty in how He healed and was not restricted to any fixed rule.
- F. The importance of this story for Mark is that it anticipates the opening of the eyes of understanding of the disciples. This is the second in a pair of incidents that only Mark records (the first one is 7:24-37) and that fulfill the Old Testament Messianic expectations of Isaiah 35:5-6.

**XI. *Jesus Tests The Faith Of The Twelve Near Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21)***

- A. Popular opinion did not honor Him as the Messiah, but since it accepted Him as a prophet, the people were therefore inexcusable in not receiving the statements which He made in regard to Himself, and admitting the Messianic claims which He set forth.
- B. Peter gave his answer as an assured fact and not as a mere opinion. This confession embraces two propositions: (1) the office of Jesus -- the Christ, and (2) the divinity of Jesus -- the Son of God. The term "living God" was used by prophets to express the contrast between dead idols and the Supreme Being who has vitality, reason and feeling.
- C. God had revealed the truth to Peter in the words and works of Jesus, not in a miraculous way. The "gates of hell," or the forces of wickedness, would not be able to prevail against this kingdom. Jesus represents Himself as the builder and Peter the key-bearer of the kingdom or church.
- D. Peter used the keys on the day of Pentecost to open the church to the Jews and about seven years later, in Caesarea, he used them again to admit the Gentiles. In fixing the terms of admission he also fixed the terms of exclusion, for all who are not admitted are excluded.
- E. Jesus charged His disciples that they were not to tell anyone because the people were not ready to receive this truth, nor were the apostles ready to proclaim it.

**XII. *Jesus Foretells Of His Rejection, Death And Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-26; Mark 8:31-37; Luke 9:22-25)***

- A. Since Peter had just confessed that Jesus was the Christ, it was time for Jesus to correct some of the misconceptions of the disciples.
- B. Although Jesus had spoken of this earlier in His ministry, He now spoke plainly, and we see by Peter's conduct that the disciples were deeply moved by the sorrowful portion and failed to grasp the accompanying promise of a resurrection.
- C. Undoubtedly, the love of Peter prompted him to lead Jesus away and speak plainly to Him. In so doing, he overstepped his task of a disciple and assumed that he knew what course to pursue better than the Lord.
- D. Peter presented the same temptation with which the devil once called forth a similar rebuke from Christ (Matthew 4:10). He was trying to dissuade Jesus from the death on which the salvation of the world depended, and this was playing into Satan's hand.
- E. The disciple must learn to say "no" to many of the strongest cravings of the world. The cross is a symbol for duty which must be performed daily at any cost. Peter and the rest of the apostles had been thinking

about a worldly kingdom. Jesus shows the worthlessness of the whole world in comparison with the rewards of the true kingdom.

**XIII. *The Coming Of The Kingdom In That Generation (Matthew 16:27-28; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 9:26-27)***

- A. Not only Jesus' example, but the judgment He will exercise is an incentive to take up one's cross and follow Him. The Son of Man will come in his Father's glory -- the same glory God His Father enjoys -- along with His angels. At that time He will reward each person according to what he has done.
- B. The mention of His final coming suggested one nearer at hand which was to be accomplished during the life of most of those present. The expression refers to the kingdom which was organized and set in motion at Pentecost which followed the resurrection of Jesus.

**XIV. *The Transfiguration Of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-29)***

- A. Mt. Hermon is the highest mountain in Palestine, with an elevation of 9,400 feet. It was Jesus' custom to withdraw for prayer by night, and the transfiguration took place at night.
- B. The word for decease is "exodus," an unusual word for death. It means a departure and would include everything concerning Christ from His crucifixion to His ascension.
- C. When Peter made his suggestion, he placed Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. The voice from the cloud gave Jesus the preeminence of a son over his servants. He is to be heard. His words have preeminence over those of the lawgiver and the prophet (Hebrews 1:1-2).

**XV. *The Inquiry Concerning Elijah (Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; Luke 9:36)***

- A. The people were not ready for the announcement of such an event. To have revealed it at that point would only have raised doubts as to its reliability.
- B. The disciples were puzzled by the disappearance of Elijah. They looked upon him as having come to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6, but they marveled that, having come, he would disappear so soon, and that they were forbidden to reveal that they had seen him.
- C. Elijah came, but the scriptures concerning him were so misunderstood that he was put to death. The Messiah also came, and the prophecies concerning Him were so misunderstood that He too would be killed. Malachi used the name of Elijah figuratively to represent John the Baptist.

D. It is not at all clear that they have understood much more about the death and resurrection of Jesus, and it becomes obvious during the narrative of His crucifixion that they have not understood. This section, therefore, marks another step, but a small one, in the understanding of Jesus' disciples.

**XVI. *The Demoniac Boy (Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43)***

- A. We last heard of the multitude in Mark 8:34. They had no doubt been with Jesus until He ascended the mountain and had remained with His apostles until He came down.
- B. Jesus' inquiry as to what the other disciples and the crowd were arguing about brought a reply from a man who had brought his demon-possessed and epileptic son for healing. The disciple's failure to heal at first seems strange, since Jesus had clearly given them power to heal and cast out demons. Yet it is part of the pattern of the disciples' advance and failure. In other situations they had shown lack of faith as well.
- C. If Jesus marveled at the faith of a Gentile which trusted the fulness of His divine power, He also marveled at the disbelief of this Jew who questioned the sufficiency of that power. In the remainder of His answer Jesus shows that the lack of power is not in Him, but in those who would be recipients of the blessings of His power, for those blessings are obtained by faith.
- D. Jesus may have wanted to have a longer conversation with the man, but the growing crowd compelled Him to act. The failure of the disciples only emphasized the power of the Lord. Prayer was the means of increasing faith.

**XVII. *Jesus Foretells Of His Death And Resurrection Again (Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45)***

- A. This repetition of the prediction of Jesus' suffering might be considered as a separate section, had not Luke connected it closely with the preceding incident by the marveling of the crowd.
- B. The prediction of suffering serves to emphasize that Jesus' ultimate purpose went beyond such miracles as the previous one. This time Jesus includes a reference to His betrayal.
- C. What was told to them was not for their present but their future benefit, and therefore they were left to consider the words of Jesus. They were beginning to absorb the announcement of Jesus' death, and it grieved them.

**XVIII. *Jesus Contributes The Tribute Money From The Fish (Matthew 17:24-27)***

- A. The law of Moses required every male from twenty years and upward to pay a half-shekel annually for the support of the temple (Exodus 30:12-16; 2 Chronicles 24:5-6).
- B. Peter answered with his usual impulsive presumption. Perhaps he thought the tax was paid out of the bag held by Judas, or he may have assumed that Jesus would have fulfilled this as one of God's requirements.
- C. The argument was that if sons of kings are free from the payment of the tribute, then the Son of God would be free from the tribute as well. Jesus paid the tribute in such a manner as to show that all of nature was tributary to Him.

**XIX. *The Twelve Argue As To Who Will Be The Greatest (Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48)***

- A. The fact that Peter received the keys of the kingdom of heaven and that only Peter, James and John witnessed the transfiguration no doubt started the dispute as to which one would hold the highest office in the kingdom. Jesus told them plainly that they must turn from their sin of personal ambition or they could not be His disciples.
- B. He pointed them to a child as the model life in this instance because the humble spirit in which a child looks up to its parents stood in sharp contrast to their self-seeking, self-exalting ambition.
- C. Greatness does not consist in place. Disciples who receive those of a childlike spirit and disposition that they may thereby honor the name of Christ are honored of Christ as the greatest.

**XX. *The Mistaken Zeal Of The Apostle John Rebuked By Jesus (Matthew 18:6-14; Mark 9:38-50; Luke 9:49-50)***

- A. The man's action had made John jealous. Jesus showed that one who knows enough of Him to use His power is not apt to dishonor Him. If a man is in no way against Christ, then he is for Him; and if he is not for Christ, he is against Him.
- B. The smallest act of righteousness, if performed for the sake of Christ, will be honored in the kingdom. However, the smallest act of evil will also inevitably receive its punishment. Greeks, Romans and Egyptians were punished by drowning with a millstone.
- C. It is better to deny ourselves all unlawful pleasures, even if the denial be as painful and distressing as the loss of a member. The image of the worm is taken from Isaiah 66:24, where it refers to the worms which feed upon the carcasses of men. The figures depict hell as a

state of decay which is never completed and of burning which does not consume.

- D. The passage further summarizes and contrasts the two states of future preservation, one being the salt of eternal life which preserves a man to enjoy the love of God in heaven, and the other being the salt of fire which preserves him in hell to endure the punishment of God.
- E. Those who have led highly moral lives have a tendency to despise those who have been defiled by sin. The anxiety and trouble caused by the sheep's wandering enhances the value of the sheep. Sin excites pity, compassion and other tender emotions in the heart of God.

**XXI. *Instructions Concerning The Right Treatment Of Others (Matthew 18:15-35)***

- A. Having warned against giving offense, Jesus now shows how to act when offense is received. The fault is to be pointed out to the offender, but for the purpose of gaining him -- not from a desire to humiliate him.
- B. The binding and loosing mentioned here is limited by the context. Binding represents exclusion from membership. Loosing, the restoration to fellowship in cases of repentance. The church's act of binding or loosing will be recognized in heaven if performed according to the word of God.
- C. Jesus plays upon the words of Peter to show that there is no numerical limitation. To keep track of 490 offenses, one would have to open a set of books with his neighbor, which would be ridiculous. Forgiveness and love know no bounds.
- D. Since the debt was forgiven by the master, the harsh conduct by the forgiven slave was inexcusable. God's forgiveness places us under obligation to be forgiving. Refusing to forgive is a sin with God.

**XXII. *The Followers Of Jesus Must Give Up All For His Service (Luke 9:57-62)***

- A. The familiar "rule of three" is employed by Luke in recording three conversations. There is an interchange of order: in the first conversation the inquirer initiates the conversation and Jesus states the objection; in the second order this is reversed; in the third the man both initiates the dialogue and raises the objection, with Jesus adding a comment.
- B. Comparing Luke with Matthew 8:19-22, we find that Matthew gives two and Luke three proposals to follow Him, and that they differ widely as to the time. Such offers of discipleship were probably very common, which would account for the similarity in two vastly different times.

- C. It was important for an ancient plowman to concentrate on the furrow before him, guiding the light plow with his left hand while goading the oxen with the right. Looking away would result in a crooked furrow.

**XXIII. *The Unbelieving Brothers Of Jesus Counsel Him To Publicize Himself In Jerusalem (John 7:2-9)***

- A. The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of the major feasts of the Jews. It not only commemorated the time when Israel dwelt in the wilderness in tents, but also celebrated the harvest. It was, therefore, a thanksgiving both for permanent abodes and for the year's crops.
- B. The twelve had been instructed well to confess Him as Messiah, but thousands of His disciples had not seen a miracle for six months. To his brothers, this secrecy seemed foolish on the part of the One who desired to be known.
- C. The great manifestation of the cross and resurrection could not take place before Passover, six months away. However, His brothers, having no message and no manifestation, could show themselves at Jerusalem at any time.
- D. The world hates those who are not of it, and who rebuke its sins and oppose its ways. Jesus did go to the feast, but He did not go up to manifest Himself, as His brothers had asked.

**XXIV. *Jesus Goes Privately To Jerusalem Through Samaria (Luke 9:51-56; John 7:10)***

- A. The secrecy of this journey consists in the fact that Jesus did not join the caravans or pilgrim bands, and that He did not follow the usual Peraean route, but went directly through Samaria.
- B. Taken in its strictest sense, the expression "taken up" refers to the Lord's ascension, but it is here used to speak of His entire lot of suffering. Though our Lord's death was still six months distant, His going to Jerusalem is described as a special effort, because from that time forward Jerusalem would be His "home base."
- C. Refusing to receive a religious teacher was considered a rejection of his claim. This rejection aroused the ire of James and John, but Jesus was a Savior and not a destroyer, so He passed on to another village. The later conduct of John contrasts sharply with the wish he expressed here (Acts 8:14-25).