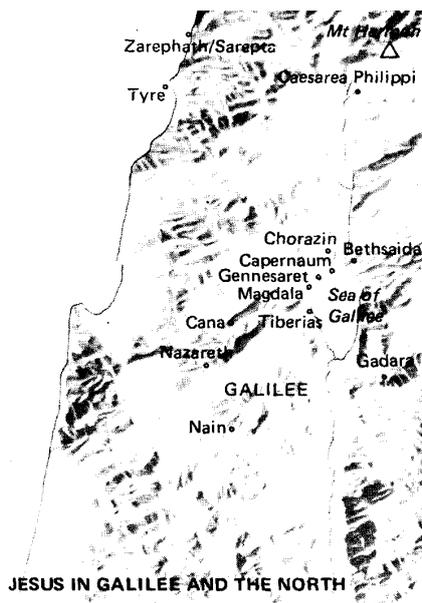


Following Christ Through The Gospels

Part Two

With the purpose of ordaining His disciples (Mk. 3:13-19) the Lord Jesus Christ went to one of the Galilean mountains where He also attracted a large audience. The Gospel of Matthew (4:25) records, "And there followed him [*the Lord Jesus*] great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." He began to speak *particularly* to His disciples (Mt. 5:1b,2) and on the Mount of Beatitudes He set before them the rule of law within His new Kingdom and these included The Beatitudes, as recorded in Mt. 5 and Luke 6. A compilation of His teaching on the Mount of Beatitudes regarding such issues as divorce, oaths and forgiveness spans Mt. 5-7. He concluded His teaching at this point relating the parable of the foolish and wise men. Consequently, He had a great influence upon His hearers (Mt. 7:28).



As the Lord Jesus once again entered into the villages and towns of northern Galilee many of the crowds that listened to Him on the Mount followed Him. In the midst of thousands of people a lone leper approached Him and asked for healing (Mt. 8:1; Mk. 1:40; Lk. 5:12). Notice that the leper fell on his face (Lk. 5:12) and, following healing, was immediately commanded to go and show himself to the priest. Calls for him to say nothing about Christ's miraculous power fell on deaf ears, - he told everyone! (Mk. 1:45; Lk. 5:15) Consequently Jesus' popularity continued to grow. However, despite His flourishing popularity, note His dependence upon His Father (Lk. 5:16).

After the leper Jesus was confronted by another piraya, as viewed by Jewish society, a Roman soldier who was seeking His help regarding his servant. Jesus used this opportunity to highlight the depth of faith portrayed by a Gentile! (Mt. 8:10; Lk. 7:9).

So far, Jesus has healed a leper, heeded a Roman, and now Luke records the occasion of Christ raising the widow of Nain's son from the dead (Lk. 7:11). Note that Jesus met the situations with the spirit of "compassion" (Mk. 1:41; Lk. 7:13). He also healed the mother of Peter and Andrew (Mt. 8:14,15; Mk. 1:29-31; Lk. 4:38,39). His interest in ordinary people, - even outcasts and people on the lower strata of society gained His attention. His fame now was beginning to spread from Galilee into the region of Judea (Lk. 7:17). Onlookers detected that the evidence pointed in only one direction: "That God hath visited his people" (Lk. 7:16) and even the devils recognised Him. "Thou art Christ the Son of God" (Lk. 4:41).

As we have already seen, Jesus welcomed the crowds and attended to their needs. It was also tremendously important that He spent time alone with His Father. Furthermore, it was highly important that He had the opportunity to train and disciple His followers, - after all their calling was to make known His Good News. Therefore He entered them into the 'Theological and Biblical Institute of Galilee', i.e. the fishing boat (Mt. 8:18; Mk. 4:35; Lk. 8:22). There He taught them how to be 'fishers of men' (cf. Mt. 4:19), in other words, He gave them hands-on experience in the midst of people for whom they cared.

Then, as they docked, a scribe (a man with education) approached Him, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest" (Mt. 8:19). Another man made a similar claim, ... and then another. They wanted to follow Jesus, ... but alas, *on their own terms!* (Lk. 9:57-62) Jesus, however, left them in no doubt regarding the stature of a true disciple, - "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). In no uncertain terms Jesus wished to get across to any budding followers that a disciple is a person who has an unfettered desire to serve the Master.