

January 30-February 5, 2023

Matthew 4; Luke 4-5

“PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD”

Summary: *Matthew 4. Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted—He begins His ministry, calls disciples, and heals the sick.*

Luke 4. Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted by the devil—Jesus announces His divine sonship in Nazareth and is rejected—He casts out a devil in Capernaum, heals Peter’s mother-in-law, and preaches and heals throughout Galilee.

Luke 5. Peter, the fisherman, is called to catch men—Jesus heals a leper—He forgives sins and heals a paralytic—Matthew is called—The sick need a physician—New wine must be put in new bottles.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is Capernaum?

Most of Jesus’ ministry was in the Galilean region. It is estimated that of his thirty-six-month ministry, eighteen to twenty months were centered at Capernaum. Nowadays, many Christians call it the City of Jesus. “Capernaum is a village with a Christian and a Jewish history. Located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, its name is a distortion of the Hebrew words *Kefar* (“village of”) and *Nahum* (which is a personal name).” “The first mention of Capernaum is found in the writings of Josephus. In *The Jewish Wars* he described it as “a highly fertile spring called by the inhabitants Capharnaum.” The New Testament refers to the village in several places. Jesus chose Capernaum as his place of residence; Capernaum is sometimes even termed “his own city.” He was also said to have preached at the village synagogue. As Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee, it served as a fishing center. Five of the apostles of Jesus were said to be fishermen from Capernaum.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The word *Nahum* can also be connected to “console.” Jesus of Nazareth consoled so many in Capernaum, *Kfar Nahum*. Obviously, Capernaum is mentioned in

the New Testament before Joseph Mattias (Matthew), became a leader of several towns in the Galilee area and took on the name Flavius, one of Emperor Vespasian’s names, when Josephus defected to become a Roman citizen.

Who lived in Capernaum?

“Jews and Christians lived in Capernaum through the Talmudic period (to 500 C.E.). Several notable ruins of historical importance remain there. One of these ruins is called Tell Hum in Arabic. The most significant reminder of the past is, however, a synagogue which was unearthed in 1905.” “The synagogue dates from the late second or early third century and is one of the best-preserved Galilean synagogues of the early type. The exterior is finely decorated. It has one large and two small entrances which lead to a main hall. Within the hall there are two parallel rows of columns and stone benches along the walls. The interior is undecorated and no evidence of a Torah ark is to be found. There are steps leading to an upper gallery, probably used for women worshipers. The walls of the gallery were decorated with artwork depicting plants of *Erez* (land of) Israel and Jewish religious symbols, including the Tabernacle, menorah and Torah Ark.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) One of the reasons scholars date the synagogue to

after Jesus' life is because of its beautiful Roman architecture. Yet there are some simple, convincing evidences that connect the building to Jesus' time. First, Luke tells us about the builder. "Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." **(Luke 7:1-5)** Second, the artistic renditions of the "Magen David" (Star of David) on the synagogue have a noteworthy exception. There are two of these at Capernaum. One of them is straight up; the other (like most of these symbols everywhere else), are at a slight right slant. The fact that the symbol is slanted denotes the destruction of the temple. The one at Capernaum and a few others that are straight seem to indicate that they were carved while the temple was still standing. Incidentally, all synagogues face toward Jerusalem. Third, there are two doorways in and out of the synagogue. After the temple was destroyed, all synagogue entrances (coming from Jerusalem) were closed, and a back door was opened. The symbolism may mean that we are now coming from the Diaspora into the place of worship and must return to the Diaspora. Jews' synagogue prayers used to end with the hopeful words, "Next year in Jerusalem." Now that Jerusalem is restored, the prayers read, "Next year in Jerusalem—rebuilt." The Capernaum synagogue has both a pre- and post-temple destruction entrance.

When are scriptures read publicly, now, and then?

It is the custom to read the scriptures, the Law, and the Prophets, three times a week. That occurs on Sunday night—Mondays, Wednesday night—Thursdays, and Sabbaths (Friday night—Saturdays). It takes one year, and the entire "Old Testament" is completed. Although they lack a "correlation department" (as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has), every congregation reads the same sections on the same day. That is why a lad anticipating his Bar Mitzvah selects a date and practices reading the section appointed for that day. In Jesus' day, it seems apparent that the Jews read the scriptures publicly in the synagogue only on the Friday night—Saturday Sabbath day. Since, two-thousand years ago, they read only once a week, it stands to reason that it would take three years to read through the entire Law and the Prophets. It is interesting to note that the Savior's ministry was three years in length. Perhaps He chose that time frame so that He could personally teach his Disciples all of the Law and the Prophets. The scriptural connection to reading once a week is corroborated by Luke's account. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." **(Luke 4:16)**

What is the benefit of adjusting the image of the "Carpenter" to "Craftsman?"

On that occasion, the Isaiah text was the scripture of the day. Isaiah had written it approximately seven hundred years previously, and he wrote it in "first person." As Jesus read the word "anointed," He was stating that He was the Messiah, which means anointed. The

local inhabitants knew Him as the son of Mary and her husband as the “craftsman.” The original language of the New Testament was Greek, and, in that account, Joseph is a craftsman. The craft of Nazareth was and still is a huge stone quarry. The imagery of one who works with stone is scripturally supported much better than the “western” interpretation of Joseph being a carpenter. Jesus is the Rock of Salvation; He is the stone which the builders rejected. He was rejected at Nazareth, and they wanted to stone Him by casting Him to his death over an abandoned quarry covering Him with rocks (that is the biblical method of stoning). References to the Rock of Salvation and the Stone refer to the Messiah. “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” (Psalms 95:1) “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” (Psalms 118:22) “And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.” (Mark 12:10)

How does a lake become known as a sea?

The central geographic highlight of the Galilean area is the Sea of Galilee. Small as a lake, it is referred to as a sea because in ancient Hebrew, there were fewer words and the word for body of water was simply, Yam, (pronounced yum). Hence, we have the *Yam Hatichon* (Mediterranean), *Yam HaMelach* (the Salt Lake) and *Yam Kinneret* (Sea of Galilee). Its Hebrew name is *Kinneret*. “The Kinneret is a freshwater lake in northeast Israel. It covers an area of 64 square miles; its maximum length (north to south) is 15 miles, and its maximum width (east to west) is 10 miles. The surface of the lake is approximately 696 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea and, at its deepest, the water is about 144 feet deep. The *Kinneret* is fed by a number of

freshwater streams. There are also salty springs at the lake bottom and along its shores. These add to the salt content (salinity) of the water which is intensified by the high evaporation rate due to the hot climate. The amount of water in the lake varies a great deal with the shift from rainy to drought years. Until the winter of 1973/74 several years of drought had lowered the surface considerably but that exceedingly rainy winter restored it to its average. The river Jordan flows out of the southern end. In 1964 the National Water Carrier was completed to bring sweet water to the more southern sections of Israel; Lake Kinneret is the main reservoir from which the water is taken.”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) In year 2023, desalinated Mediterranean water has replaced the Sea of Galilee as the main water reservoir for Israel and some of that water is poured into the lake to keep it at its ecological health and natural level.

How were the names of the lake derived through time?

The Sea of Galilee is called a sea from a translator who was dealing with the small language of Hebrew. A body of water is called “*yam*.” The shape of this body of water is similar to a harp known as *kinnor*. The Hebrew *Yam Kinneret* is a lake in northern Israel through which the Jordan River flows. Later it was called the Lake of Gennesaret. “Because of its abundant water supply, warm climate and surrounding fertile area, Lake Kinneret has attracted man since prehistoric times. The most ancient human remains, and artifacts found in *Erez* (land of) Israel come from an area not far from Lake *Kinneret's* shores. In the Early Bronze Age some of the largest cities of Canaan were situated nearby and the Via Maris (“Maritime Route”) passed its shores contributing to the wealth of the cities. In fact, Egyptian documents mention the hot springs on the shores of Lake *Kinneret* and their beneficial effects. In Bible times,

Kinneret served as a prominent boundary mark: in the Canaanite era, it was the border of Sidon, king of the Amorites, and after Israel's conquest of the land, it marked the boundary between the territories of Naphtali on its western shores and Manasseh on its eastern shores." "In the period of the Roman occupation, King Herod received the city of Hippus (Susitha), which bordered on the east of the lake, and Herod's sons, Antipas and Philip, founded the cities of Tiberias and Julias (Bethsaida). (Subsequently the lake also became known as the Sea of Tiberias.) Moreover, it was also during the Roman period that the Lake *Kinneret* region served as the setting of Jesus' preaching, and later as the center of his apostles' activities. As a result, many churches were later built on these same shores. The crusaders fought to control the lake area because of its historic connections with Christianity. The New Testament refers to the lake as the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of *Gennesaret*." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How can I better envision the profession of fishing on the Galilee waters?

To this very day, fishermen ply their craft on the waters of this beautiful lake. Often, they use two boats. One is larger and has a main mast with a pulley to lift the nets up and out of the water. The other end of the net is connected to a smaller boat. The fish (there are more than twenty varieties in the lake) swim through the nets; only the larger ones are caught and are then plucked out of the net as it is lifted into the larger boat. Fishermen still prefer to fish at night and during the hours just before dawn. They use lanterns to attract the fish. Imagine fishing all night and catching nothing; then a "perfect" stranger embarks on your boat and tells you to cast the net on the other side. And it changes your life! "And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and

prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (**Luke 5:4-8**) Note that this was probably the largest catch they had ever encountered in their professional life, yet they could not quite bring it in. They were also told to let it go, for now they were to become fishers of men. "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him." (**Matthew 4:19-20**)

Who makes me a better "Fisher of men?"

In a subsequent lesson, we will study the repeat of this event as a chiasmus: the first catch before their training, and three years later, the last catch after their training. The first catch failed; the second catch succeeded. The net result of recognizing these catches as patterns of Jesus' teaching is by getting centered on Him, getting drawn to Him!

How does the Savior fulfill the names of "Old Wine" and "New Wine?"

Luke prepares us to understand how the Lord is the "old" and the "new" wine. Jesus used an old performance of an eternal ordinance of "Wine and Bread," ("old wine," as the religious Jews still do every Sabbath eve – praying in

anticipation of a greater deliverance than from Egypt), when He explained the meaning of “Bread and Wine,” and instituted a new meaning, “in remembrance of the blood of thy Son,” (**Doctrine and Covenants 20:79**) for a weekly ritual (new wine). There is a verse in the Book of Joel that bridges His day when the Lord was known to the end of days when He would not be known. The Lord has many names, one of them being “Old Wine” and “New Wine.” “Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.” (**Joel 1:5**) In the Meridian of Times, the Apostle Luke seems to amplify this metaphor of the Lord being “New Wine.” “No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” (**Luke 5:39**) It is generally considered that aging makes wine better; hence, old wine is better than the new. At a festivity, the oldest, best wine is used first and then the more recent wine is used. When wine ran out at a marriage feast in Cana, Jesus was asked by his mother for assistance. Perhaps He referred to one of His names (New Wine) by indicating that

His time (fulfillment of New Wine) had not yet come. “And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” (In Hebrew, better understood as “Dear lady, what can I do for you? My hour to fulfill New Wine is not yet.”) (**John 2:3-4**) He graciously turned water into wine (very new), and it was better than the old. It may be that the prophetic metaphor of New Wine was fulfilled when Jesus, at the Last Supper, instituted a new meaning for the old ordinance of wine and bread. Jews still have a memory of that ritual as they pour, bless, and sip wine (*Kiddush*), followed by breaking, blessing, and eating a piece of bread at the beginning of every Sabbath (*Motzi*). The prayers accompanying that custom anticipate a future redemption that would be greater than being redeemed from Egypt at the first Passover. The only time Jews will break, bless, and eat a piece of bread first, followed by pouring, blessing, and sipping wine last is when children at the traditional Passover meal (*Seder*) find the “hidden piece of bread” (*Afikomen*).