

Focus #4: The Training of the Twelve

I. A Review of Jesus' life and ministry to this point:

1. The outline of the section of the life and ministry of Jesus which we have studied to this point is as follows:

I. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (Jn 1:14)

The first advent of Jesus: His birth, infancy' and boyhood

II. "He came unto His own . . ." (John 1:1 la)

The emergence of Jesus into public life; a time of relative obscurity [baptism, temptation, 1st miracle]

III. "Jesus came . . . preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God"

Initial crises and ministries in Judea and Samaria; Jesus is gaining the attention of the nation [cleanses temple, Nicodemus, woman at the well]

IV. "The people that sat in darkness saw great light. . ."

Opening the 18 month ministry in Galilee; a time of growing favor with the people [the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount]

V. "Great multitudes followed Him . . ."

Completing the great Galilean ministry; a time of great popularity

2. Remember that late in the 18-month Galilean Ministry the Pharisees had committed the "unpardonable sin" (Matthew 12), demonstrating to Jesus that they were so thoroughly and entirely committed to disbelief that there was no hope that they would repent and accept His claims.

In light of this realization, Jesus' emphasis now changes from:

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Of Himself as the Messiah of
Israel

Saturating all the bands of the
Jews

Vindicating the claim by means
of miracles!

PRIVATE PRESENTATION

Of His disciples for His
impending death

Seeking to find solitude from
crowds

Avoiding miracles, speaking in
parables

II. "JESUS WALKED IN GALILEE . . . BECAUSE THE JEWS SOUGHT TO KILL HIM"

(Special training for the Twelve: Out of favor and on the move in and around Galilee)

A. This portion of Jesus' ministry covers a period of about 6 months (That is, the first 1/2 of the last year of Jesus' life).

B. This is a period which aptly titled, Out of Favor and on the Move in and around Galilee.

- The emphasis of Jesus' ministry had completely shifted by this time.
- For about 2 1/2 years He has traveled throughout Palestine PUBLICLY PRESENTING Himself as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, and laying down the standards to be met in order to identify with Him and His Kingdom.
- Now that nation has hardened itself against that message, and the desire to see this Jesus executed has begun to control the minds and hearts of the leaders of the people.
- That hardness was manifestly demonstrated to have settled upon the leaders of the people in Mt 12, as they concocted the charge of Satanic empowerment rather than accept the claims of the Lord. Jesus had perceived a similar hardness in the people themselves in John 6, when His so-called disciples abandoned Him rather than submit to His demand that they learn to trust completely and exclusively in Him The Galilean campaign had collapsed as a result of these two events.
- Now Jesus knows that the Jews are hungry to see Him slain, and He sets out to PRIVATELY PREPARE His disciples for His death, resurrection, and subsequent absence from their midst.
- For the next several months Jesus is actively and deliberately seeking solitude, endeavoring to find time and opportunity to teach His disciples and prepare Himself for the great work yet to be finished.
- This period of about 6 months is to be passed in the exclusive company of the Twelve, as far as is possible. It was also to be spent largely in heathen lands, where few Jews would be encountered. However, because of the enormous popularity of Jesus with the common people by this time, this task of finding places of solitude was always a very difficult one.

C. Reasons why Jesus at this time sought to seclude Himself from His own people, the Israelites:

1. There was serious danger to Jesus from Herod Antipas, ruler in Galilee and Perea, who had been frightened by the popular response to Jesus and by His claim to be King of the Jews.
2. The leaders of the Jews, angry with Jesus ever since His first appearance at the Passover (John 2:18,19), were now furious with Him. They were following Him everywhere He went, always looking for a way to discredit and/or kill Him.

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This lecture covers items #89-107 in your PROPOSED HARMONY.

3. Most important, Jesus wanted time to privately instruct the twelve. The shadow of the cross loomed ever larger, and the Lord did not want the catastrophe of His death to find His apostles wholly unprepared.

IMPORTANT:

Up to this point in Jesus' ministry--that is, the first 2 1/2 years and even well into this final year--Jesus had *not once* foretold His death in an explicit manner.

Indeed, when He does foretell that event, the very concept of His dying has a devastating effect on His closest disciples.

As we consider this final year, be sensitive to this issue of the unfolding by Jesus of the fact of His impending death.

III. A SURVEY OF THE EVENTS OF THIS PERIOD

A. The retreat to Phoenicia (the regions of Tyre and Sidon)

1. Jesus & the 12 take residence in a private home (Mk 7:24)
2. Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman from that region (7:25-30)

Note: Why was Jesus reluctant to heal the daughter of this woman?

B. The withdrawal into Decapolis (the region east of the Sea of Galilee)

1. A deaf and dumb man is healed by the Lord (Mk 7:31-37)
2. Great crowds assemble; Jesus teaches them for three days, and then feeds 4000 Gentiles (Mk 8:1-9)

C. Brief foray back into Galilee

1. The arrival in a deserted spot in Galilee (Mt 15:39)
2. The Pharisees and Sadducees find Jesus there and demand a sign (the third time they had done so); Jesus refuses and rebukes them (Mt 16:1-4)
3. As Jesus and His disciples depart the place by boat Jesus warns His disciples concerning the leaven of the Pharisees; they misunderstand, and Jesus rebukes them for their dullness (16:5-12)

Note: This incident seems to have impressed Jesus anew with the desperate need of the disciples to be instructed and trained.

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D. The retreat to Caesarea-Philippi (a region far to the north of the Sea of Galilee)

1. On the way (in Bethsaida), a blind man is hastily and carefully healed (Mk 8:22-26)
2. Jesus tests the faith of the Twelve concerning His Messiah-ship; Peter's great Confession of the Person of Christ is given (Mt 16: 13-20)
3. Jesus FIRST distinct prophecy of His soon rejection, death, and resurrection Mt 16:21-28)

Notice the reaction of the disciples to this prophecy, and the challenge which Jesus lays before them in light of that reaction

4. The TRANSFIGURATION of Jesus

Scripture: Matthew 17; Luke 9

- The background--this event cannot be properly comprehended except as it is considered against the backdrop of Mt 16:21-28.
- The essential significance of the Transfiguration--Jesus allowed the inner three disciples to become eyewitnesses for a brief moment to the physical glory which will belong to Jesus when He reigns as Messiah upon the earth.

Compare 1 Peter 1:16-21.

- The two-fold purpose of the TRANSFIGURATION:
 - 1.) to encourage Jesus as He faced the cross;
 - 2.) to fortify the staggering faith of the disciples in the Messiah-ship of Jesus--faith which was staggering because of Jesus' recent announcement that He was going to die!
- Three sequels to the TRANSFIGURATION:
 - 1.) After the Transfiguration, the three disciples wax bold to ask a question that has been troubling them: "If you are the Messiah, Jesus, has Elijah come or not?"
 - 2.) Descending from the mount of Transfiguration, the disciples and Jesus encounter the other 9 disciples; those 9 are disconcerted because they had tried to deliver a demoniac boy but had been unable to do so (Mt 17:14-21).
 - 3.) Returning privately through Galilee, Jesus again foretells His death and resurrection (Mt 17:22,23)

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E. Last Efforts in Galilee.

1. At Capernaum, Jesus pays the temple tax by means of a miracle (Mt 17:24-27)
2. The 12 argue who shall be the greatest under Messiah's rule; Jesus gives a lesson on humility (Mt 18:1-5)
3. John is rebuked for his sectarian spirit; the principle is reinforced by pertinent parables (Mt 18:6-14)
4. Instruction is given concerning the settling of disputes; the parable of the unmerciful servant dictates the spirit which must prevail (Mt 18:15-35)
5. As the death of Jesus draws nearer, the Lord reiterates the demands of discipleship (Mt 8:19-22; Luke 9:57-62)

Note: As the period known as the "Training of the Twelve" draws to a close, 3 of the 3 1/2 years of Jesus' public ministry have passed. In other words, Jesus is now within 6 months of His passion. The rejection by Israel is manifest, and Jesus is yet struggling to prepare His disciples for the awful events soon to occur. It is good at this time to meditate upon the course of events in Jesus' ministry up to this point. As we approach the last few months of this most blessed of all dramas, be sensitive to several distinctive elements of the Gospel narratives, to wit:

- a) the insensitivity and lack of understanding of the disciples, those closest to Jesus, and the sorrow of heart this causes the Lord'
- b) the hardness of Israel - especially manifest in her leaders - and the increasingly brazen character of that obduracy; and
- c) the many ways in which Jesus demonstrates His absolute control over the circumstances leading up to His death, orchestrating events in such a way that His Father's will is perfectly accomplished.