

Sometimes the blessing is in the journey rather than the destination. In this section of Scripture, Jesus departs from His home base of Capernaum to the East side of the Sea of Galilee, where He is rejected. He then returns. While this trip may seem like a waste of time, we know that Jesus never wasted a moment. This trip was God's will and provided opportunity for teaching, refining of faith, and preaching the gospel. When we follow the Lord, we find purpose in every aspect of life.

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)

Remember when Jesus told the leper to stay quiet about his healing? He didn't listen. He told everyone (Mark 1:45). As a result, word got out about Jesus and people were flocking to Him from all over Galilee, seeking healing. The crowds were proving to hinder His real ministry of preaching the gospel; it was time for a change of scenery. Jesus gave orders to His disciples (consisting of at least Peter, Andrew, James, and John: all fishermen) that they should sail across the Sea of Galilee to the eastern shore. We will talk about this voyage in more depth later.

Jesus' departure pressed the issue of discipleship for two men. Jesus was leaving Galilee, would they go with Him too? The first man was a scribe. Let's pause to learn about the role of the scribes.

THE SCRIBE

Person trained in writing skills and used to record events and decisions (Jer. 36:26; 1 Chron. 24:6; Esther 3:12). During the exile in Babylon educated scribes apparently became the experts in God's written word, copying, preserving, and teaching it. Ezra was a scribe in this sense of expert in teaching God's word (Ezra 7:6). A professional group of such scribes developed by NT times, most being Pharisees (Mark 2:16). They interpreted the law, taught it to disciples, and were experts in cases where people were accused of breaking the law of Moses. They led in plans to kill Jesus (Luke 19:47) and heard His stern rebuke (Matt. 23).

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

The scribe who approached Jesus addressed Him as Master (KJV) which means, "Teacher". He recognized the authority and wisdom of Jesus, who taught as no man had ever taught before (Matthew 7:28-29). He professed a willingness to submit himself to Jesus' teaching and authority and follow Him wherever He would go. How did Jesus respond and what was the point of His response?

Why would Jesus dampen this man's enthusiasm with such a bleak reply? Read both passages below and respond.

Luke 14:25-33 –

Matthew 13:20-21 –

When Jesus responded to the scribe, He called Himself the “Son of Man”. This is the first of many times that Jesus would use this title in regard to Himself. We will discuss this a little later.

There is a stark contrast between the first and second disciple. Apparently the Jesus asked the second disciple to follow Him because verse 21 begins with his response. The man asks to first be allowed to go and bury his father. Commentators are divided over the meaning of this expression. Based on my study there are three plausible explanations:

1. His father had just passed away and he wanted to have the opportunity to _____ him;
2. His father was _____ and he was asking leave of Jesus to care for him until he passed away; or
3. His father was old and he wanted to stick around until he passed so that he wouldn't miss out on his _____.

The disagreement over the meaning of the man's request centers on Jesus' response. He responded, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.” (ESV) What does this mean?

This passage in Matthew is also recounted by Luke in his gospel. Read Luke 9:59-60. What was Jesus calling this man to do?

Elisha's calling to the ministry was somewhat similar. Read 1 Kings 19:19-21. What was Elisha's response to the call? What was Elijah's response to Elisha's request?

What distinction can we draw between Elijah's response and Jesus' response?

Considering the three options listed above, what do you think this man was requesting of Jesus? Also consider Luke 14:25-33 discussed earlier.

It is interesting that the scribe said he would follow Jesus wherever He went. The second man was commanded by Jesus to follow Him. In light of John 15:16, what do we see occurring in this passage?

We see in this passage that Jesus' philosophy of ministry was different than is popular in many Christian circles today. He didn't try to candy coat the truth and win as many followers as possible in hopes that they might someday really get saved. He put the clear truth out before them from the beginning. Jesus has a remarkable way of separating the wheat (true disciples) from the chaff (false disciples). Truly, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

When responding to the first disciple, Jesus called Himself, "The Son of Man". This is the first use of this title in Matthew, and the entire New Testament for that matter. Within the gospels, no one ever calls Jesus the Son of Man; it is a title He uses to refer to Himself. We need to go back to the Old Testament to understand how this title was used historically.

1. It was a title used to refer to _____. See Psalm 8:4.
2. It referred to _____ generally. See Psalm 80:17
3. It was a title used by God to refer to _____ in the visions he received. See Ezekiel 2:1-3
4. He was the One who received a _____ from the Father. See Daniel 7:13-14.

Given the broad usage of this term in the Old Testament, what did people think when Jesus used this title? Read John 12:27-34.

This is just the first time we have run into this title. In this context, Jesus says that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. In John 12:27-34 we read of the Son of Man being lifted up. We will also read of the Son of Man forgiving sins (Matt. 9:6), being Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8), sending angels (Matt. 13:41), and ultimately sitting on a throne (Matt. 19:28). What did Jesus mean when He referred to Himself as "the Son of Man"?

Why did the Jews have such a hard time understanding this title?

Why did Jesus use such a confusing phrase to refer to Himself? Perhaps the answer lies within the confusion. D.A. Carson writes, "The simplest answer is that He used the term precisely because it was ambiguous: it could conceal as well as reveal... Jesus combined the two, Danielic Messiah and frail mortal, precisely because His own understanding of messiahship was laced with both themes."¹

How did the disciples ultimately understand the title? Read Acts 7:56.

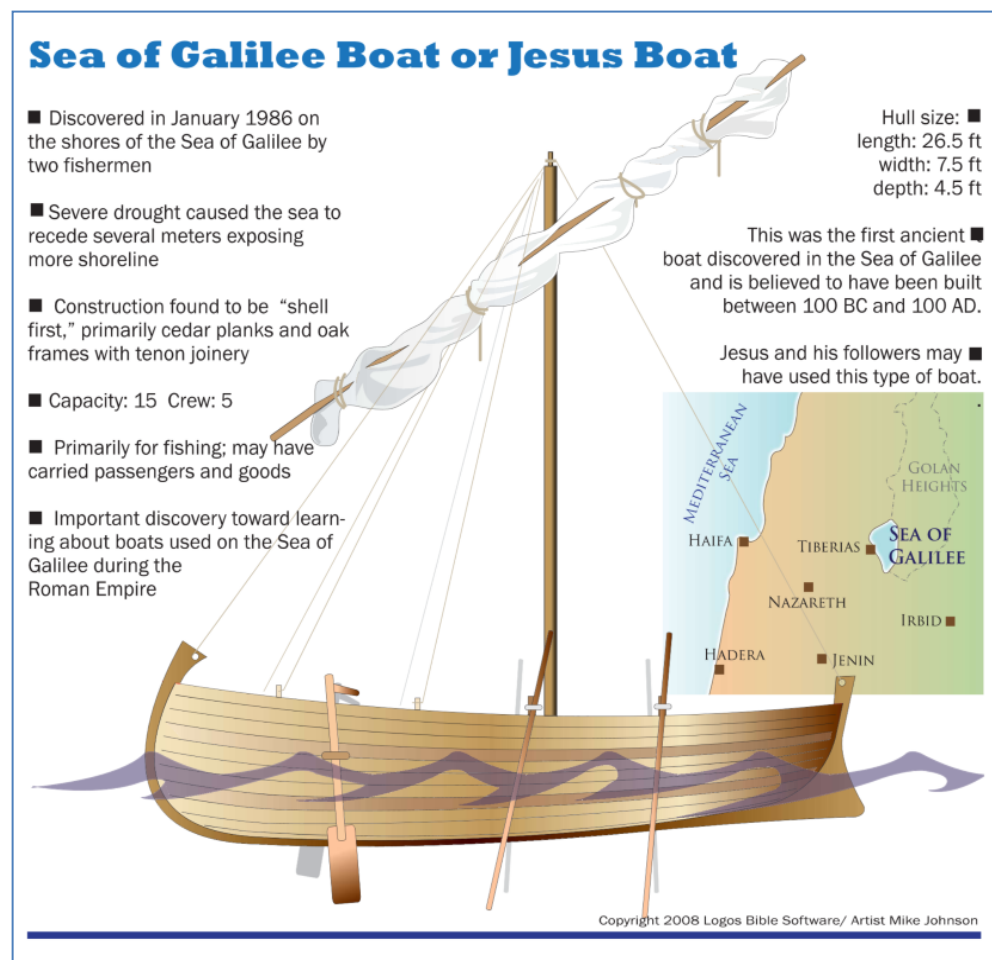
Calming the Storm at Sea (8:23-27)

The disciples who followed Jesus into the boat are not identified in Matthew but from the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke it is safe to say the twelve apostles were included. Mark even mentions that there were other boats with them (Mark 4:36).

The infographic gives us an idea of what this boat would have looked like. It was probably a typical Galilean fishing vessel and could have easily carried Jesus and all his disciples.

Parallel accounts of this voyage can be found in Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25. Read both passages to glean some more insight about this event.

Why did Jesus fall asleep on this trip?



¹ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Matthew, D.A. Carson, pp 212-213.

THE SEA OF GALILEE



The Sea of Galilee is a giant inland lake, called the Sea of Chinnereth in the Old Testament and also called the Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias in the New Testament.

It is approximately 13 miles long and almost 7 miles wide at its greatest width. It is also 700 feet below sea level. The waters are not salty (unlike the Dead Sea), but sweet as the Jordan River flows through this lake from North to South.

The Sea of Galilee was a notable fishery in the days of the Roman Empire and because of its location in the Jordan Rift (being surrounded by hills and mountains), it was very susceptible to sudden storms and great winds. There were some plains on both sides of the Sea, but the ones on the East were more abrupt and those on the West were gentler. Several towns were located on the shores of the lake, such as Capernaum and Bethsaida. They frequently communicated and traded with one another.

We read in Mark's account that Jesus was in the stern (back) of the ship, asleep on the cushion. A sudden storm arose, so great in fact that the boat was getting swamped and was in danger of sinking. This wasn't the first rodeo for these fishermen-disciples, yet the storm was great enough to make them fear for their lives. The alarm of the disciples prompted them to awaken Jesus and ask Him to save them from death. Before calming the seas and the storm, He chastened them for their fear and lack of faith. Given the storm and the sinking boat, what was wrong with their fear and faith? Read Exodus 14:10-14, Isaiah 43:1-3, Matthew 6:30-33, 16:8, and Romans 4:18-22.

What response did Jesus' control of the wind and the seas provoke in the disciples?

Read Psalm 89:8-9. What statement did Jesus make by His miracle?

Demons and Jesus Cast Out (8:28-34)

The area Jesus came to on the East side of Galilee was locally known as the Gergesenes, near the village of Gerasa and the town of Gadara. These communities were part of a larger league of 10 cities called Decapolis. Though many Jews lived in the area, it was dominated by Gentiles. We see this Gentile influence by the presence of the local pig farmer who was tending his swine near the edge of the Sea. No faithful Jew would have anything to do with unclean animals; much less own a herd of them.

The account of Jesus casting the demons out of the men is recounted in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, both of which record more detail than Matthew. Read Mark's account in Mark 5:1-20. What additional information do you learn?

What difference do you note between the two accounts? How can it be explained?

The two men that came to Jesus were demon-possessed or "demonized". While we have encountered Jesus casting out (exorcising) demons in previous passages, this is our first time to get much detail about someone who is possessed. "Demonized" is a broad term which doesn't specify the degree or kind of control the demon has over the individual. In his commentary on this passage, John MacArthur said, "Although its accounts of demonized people reflect many different conditions and degrees of control, Scripture does not clearly distinguish between being possessed, obsessed, or oppressed by demons."²

We find in Scriptures that demonic possession can manifest itself in various ways:

- The victim cannot _____ (Mark 9:17, 25; Matthew 9:32)
- The victim cannot speak or _____ (Matthew 12:22)
- The victim exhibits _____ - _____ behavior (Matthew 17:15)
- The victim possesses _____ (Mark 5:2-5, Acts 19:13-16)
- The victim has _____ (Mark 1:26; 9:20)
- The victim expresses _____ knowledge beyond their natural capacity (Acts 16:16-18)

² *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 8-15*, p. 41

Interestingly enough, there is no account of demon possession within Jerusalem. It was common in the more rural and less sophisticated areas. This doesn't mean that Satan had less influence in the city, just that he worked more discretely.

In the case of the two men who met Jesus on the shores of Galilee, the demons were in control of the individuals. The men probably had little to no independent control of their life. They were living in the tombs, most likely caves and cut out burial spots in the hillside. To a Jew, contact with dead bodies was a source of defilement (Numbers 5:2). This was another sign of the demonic control.

The demonized men were incredibly strong and posed a threat to any who encountered them. They came to meet Jesus as He left the boat, possibly with the initial intention of doing them harm. Those who are at this stage of demonic possession are often very violent, both to others and themselves. They immediately recognized Jesus. Mark's account even states that they bowed down before Christ. What did they call Jesus? Why did they bow? Read Philippians 2:10-11 and James 2:19.

To know Jesus and yet hate Him is demonic.³

The demons showed no remorse for their crimes but were instead fearful of being tormented "before the time". In Luke's account of this event, the demons begged to not be cast into the abyss (Luke 8:31). We know that there is a final judgment coming for Satan and his fallen angels. Read Jude 5-6 and Revelation 20:1-10. What are these demons afraid of?

Matthew mentions the many swine that were off in the distance. Mark tells us that there were around 2,000, to be exact. We also learn that the demons called themselves, "Legion" because there were so many of them. A Roman legion could comprise up to 6,000 soldiers. They requested they be sent into the swine. Why would the demons want to be cast into the swine? Why did the demonized swine then plunge themselves into the sea?

³ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Matthew, D.A. Carson.

Note the simplicity of exorcism for Christ. He cast out a legion with one word, "Go". Consider how some religions claim that Jesus was only a man or perhaps an archangel. How does this passage demonstrate the holiness (otherness) of Jesus Christ? Read Daniel 10:10-13 and Jude 9.

The demons request to be cast into the swine. Jesus granted their request. Why?

The response of the people from the city is perhaps one of the saddest events we have encountered thus far in our study of Matthew. They begged Jesus to leave them, to leave the whole area. Some conjecture that they were just upset about the swine. No doubt the death of 2,000 swine caught their attention. I believe their rejection goes beyond the financial loss of the farmer. Read Luke's account of their rejection in Luke 8:34-37. Why would they reject Christ?

This account is the first opposition to Christ in the gospels. Indifference and fear is probably the most common type of opposition. This is a tough reality check. Sometimes we feel there is so much darkness that people don't have a chance to hear the gospel, like the demoniacs who guarded the shores of Galilee from intruders. In this case, even when the darkness was lifted, most still did not want to hear. It is interesting that they were afraid of Jesus, the one who exorcised the demons from the man who was beyond their control or captivity. He brought clarity and calm to the chaos, yet they wanted nothing to do with such great power.

Fortunately, at least one of the two demoniacs gained saving faith in Jesus and was willing to follow Him. Instead, Jesus sent him to be a witness to those who had just rejected Him (Luke 8:38-39). What a merciful and loving Savior! What a testimony to the power and grace of our God!