**Gospels class 19—Jesus moves to Capernaum, chooses Peter, Andrew, James and John 2013-11-2**

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.

Last time we went through the background of Galilee to help us understand the background and culture of that area to better understand some of the events we see in the Gospels. I think we saw from that examination why it’s important to understand the background, because it clears up questions or misconceptions or outright wrong ideas that we may have about what we read.

By way of quick review, and this is the map on page 139 near the back of the Harmony of the Gospels, we have Jesus settling into Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, with a mix of different people and cultures and backgrounds around Him as we covered last time.

Who are the people to the southeast and south in the area labeled Decapolis? *Pagans.* What is their culture? *Greco-Roman paganism.*

Who are the people directly east to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee and what is their culture? *Zealots—Jewish nationalists.* These were the people who wanted to kick out the Romans and would kill a Roman or Roman collaborator if given the opportunity.

Who are the people to the southwest at Tiberias and what is their culture? *Herodians—*the family and supporters of the descendants of the dynasty of Herod the Great who adopted *Roman culture.*

Who are the people further southwest in Samaria and what is their culture? *Samaritans—mixture of paganism and Torah-keeping.*

And finally, who are the people around the north shore of the Sea of Galilee where Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Magdala and Gennesaret are located? *Religious Jews.* People who were devoutly religious and eagerly awaiting the Messiah to appear.

It would do you well to memorize this brief overview, because it explains a lot about what we see in the Gospels.

But why settle in Capernaum? As we covered last time, it was foretold in prophecy that the Messiah would appear in Galilee. And from what we see here, it simply wouldn’t have worked for the Messiah to have tried to carry out His ministry in the area of the pagans, or the Herodians, or the Samaritans. Why? *They probably would’ve killed Him.* And it wouldn’t have worked well for the Messiah to carry out a ministry among the Zealots, because they wanted a leader to lead them into overthrowing the Romans. They wanted a military leader who would fight to establish a physical kingdom. So that wouldn’t have worked.

But by settling in the area of the religious Jews, He would have a somewhat receptive audience, and as we’ll see in the Gospels, He attracted crowds of thousands of enthusiastic followers for an assortment of reasons. Not all the reasons were good. Some came because they wanted to be healed. Some came because they wanted a free meal. Some wanted to debate and argue. But some wanted to genuinely hear and learn what this brilliant rabbi had to say.

I might mention here that there wasn’t a great deal of difference between the Zealots and the religious Jews. In fact, the Zealots were religious Jews—very religious. Both of these groups fervently believed in obeying God. They both fervently believed in keeping the law. They both fervently believed in a Messiah. They both fervently believed and prayed for the Kingdom of God as they envisioned it, or Kingdom of heaven as they would’ve called it because they wouldn’t speak God’s name aloud.

So what was the difference? They had divided several generations earlier over *how that Kingdom of God would come about.* The Zealots envisioned the Messiah as a military leader who would rise up and lead them into defeating the hated Romans and throwing them out and establishing a Jewish kingdom with Jewish leaders rather than being ruled by these pagan Romans. The other religious Jews thought it wasn’t their place to raise up a military movement to fight the Romans, but that God would establish His Kingdom when and as He saw fit. So they wouldn’t fight the Romans. They didn’t like them, but that didn’t mean they would try to kill them like the Zealots would if given the opportunity.

And we know from history how the story played out. Eventually the Zealot view gained the upper hand, a revolt broke out in Galilee and spread throughout the land, the Romans sent in additional legions, and eventually Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 70 A.D. Another revolt followed in 132-135 A.D., and this time the Romans were so angry that they scattered the Jews and forbade any Jew from setting foot in Jerusalem on pain of death. These two wars also led to major changes in the Christian religion.

Up until this time, as we see in the book of Acts and Paul’s writings, members of the early Church are worshiping right alongside Jews in the synagogues. To the Romans, they can’t tell the difference. The Jews go to the synagogue. The Christians go to the synagogue. The Jews keep the Sabbath. The Christians keep the Sabbath. The Jews keep the Holy Days. The Christians keep the Holy Days. The Jews don’t eat unclean meats. The Christians don’t eat unclean meats. The Jews don't worship idols or the Roman emperor. The Christians don't worship idols or the Roman emperor.

But during and after these two wars, the Romans start brutally persecuting the Jews because, after all, they have rebelled against and fought the Romans. So the Romans persecute those people who are going to the synagogue, who are keeping the Sabbath, who are keeping the Holy Days, and so on. And in the latter part of the first century and early part of the second century a dramatic change begins taking place in Christianity.

By now a lot of gentiles have come into the Church. And when persecution starts, many of those in the early Church find it easier to give up on these “Jewish” practices like keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and they start worshiping on the day of the Sun—*Sun*day—and they abandon the biblical Holy Days for Roman holidays like Christmas, News Year’s Day, Easter, and others. That battle would play out over several centuries, but that’s how it all began and how we ended up with two very different versions of Christianity and a split between Judaism and Christianity that’s lasted for 2,000 years.

It’s also interesting that the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, from whom we get so much information about Jewish history, was the Jewish general leading this rebellion in Galilee. Josephus was a Pharisee and descendant of a priestly family, and from him we get a lot of information about life in Judea in the first century.

In the early part of this first Jewish rebellion, in A.D. 67, he was surrounded and surrendered to the Romans and pleaded for his countrymen to lay down their arms and surrender to the Romans also. And for this he was given Roman citizenship and a nice pension by the Roman emperors and spent his later years writing his books about Jewish history—*Antiquities of the Jews* and *Wars of the Jews.* So because of him we have a priceless resource about Jewish history—which, incidentally, independently confirms several things we read in the Gospels and even mentions several figures in the Gospels and early Church like Jesus Christ, John the Baptizer and Jesus’ half-brother James.

With that additional background, let’s pick up the story in the Gospels in **Matthew 4:13-16, which is quoting** **Isaiah 9:1-2:  
13 And leaving Nazareth,**

Why did He leave Nazareth? As we covered earlier, He spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth, His hometown, and the people tried to drag Him out and stone Him. So He had to leave Nazareth to save His own life. He has left Judea after He saw what happened to John the Baptizer and knew the same thing could happen to Him, and now He has left Nazareth because they wanted to stone Him. So He settles in Capernaum to make that the center of His ministry.

**He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:  
15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:  
16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”**So it was foretold about eight centuries earlier that the Messiah would appear in Galilee, specifically in the tribal allotment of Zebulun, which is where Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and Naphtali, which is where Capernaum and the other towns of Galilee in which Jesus conducted His ministry were located. So not just Galilee was foretold, but the *specific areas* of Galilee were foretold centuries before Jesus appeared—the area in which Nazareth was located and the are in which Capernaum was located.

But why Capernaum? Let’s talk about Capernaum a bit. Capernaum was a town of about 1500 people, somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000, in Jesus’ day. It was one of about a dozen small towns and villages around the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Here’s an artist’s conception of what it would’ve looked like based on the excavations done there. Notice the jetties for docking the fishing boats, the large synagogue about a black from the shore, and the houses and businesses of the town.

Here’s is an artist’s view of the town looking out over the Sea of Galilee. You can see the typical flat roofs of the houses, shown here with mats of fish drying on the roofs. These flat roofs also play into a story we’ll cover later where a man is healed by being lowered by his friends through one of these roofs.

Here’s in interesting historical photo taken in the late 1800s of the ruins of Capernaum. This white limestone in the foreground are blocks from the synagogue. You can see a Bedouin tent in the background and several Bedouin posed here in the foreground.

Here’s what it looks like today with a tourist boat on the Sea of Galilee and the shore at Capernaum on the right. The red-roofed building is a Greek Orthodox church. On the ground this is what it looks like today, and by far the most prominent building is the large partially restored white limestone synagogue.

Here’s an aerial view of that synagogue, which is very large. Its’ the largest ancient synagogue I’ve seen other than one in Turkey. And again, this is the area of very religious Jews, so it would stand to reason the synagogue would be large and prominent. You might also notice the large white limestone structure beside it. This was the school. In earlier messages I talked about the educational system, where the Jewish boys and girls would go to school to learn about and memorize large portions of their Bible, the boys striving to memorize the entire Torah. This is where that would’ve taken place in that community.

Here’s a larger aerial view, and you can see the excavated portion of Capernaum surrounded by a wall. This is the part tourists see today, which is about a fourth to a fifth of the whole town. This photo shows the unexcavated portions where you can see there are still obviously large unexcavated portions. It’s interesting also that the site of Capernaum is owned half by the Catholic church, which is the excavated portion, and half by the Greek Orthodox church, which is the unexcavated portion. And the Catholics got the good part with the synagogue, which is where all the visitors go, so they get the tourist dollars. The Greek Orthodox portion gets hardly any visitors.

However, there is something really interesting in the Greek portion. Years ago when they were excavating there they found the remains of a Roman military base right there in Capernaum. That might sound surprising, but not really, because one of the miracles Jesus performs in Capernaum is healing the servant of a centurion, a Roman military officer. What would a Roman military officer be doing in Capernaum? Most likely because he’s stationed there at the Roman military base, possibly even the base commander.

So this is one of those interesting intersections of the Bible and archaeology, and yet more proof that the Gospels are eyewitness accounts of these events because if someone were making up this story somewhere else and long after the fact as many biblical critics say the Gospels were written, how would they have known that there was a Roman military base in Capernaum? So again this is just one more verification of the accuracy of the Gospel accounts.

So that’s an overview of Capernaum. Any questions?

But again, why did Jesus choose this particular town out of the dozens of towns in Galilee? To answer that, let me ask another question: Why did God place the Israelites where He put them in the Promised Land? Why there? Why that particular location? What did He want them to *do* there? What did He want them to *be* there? Why that particular location out of all the places on the planet?

Is there a scriptural passage that tells us why God put the Israelites where he put them and what he wanted them to be and to do there? Yes there is. Let’s look at **Deuteronomy 4:5-6.** Deuteronomy is Moses recapping what has happened to the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness and giving them their final instructions before they enter the Promised Land. The older, unbelieving generation has died off and their children have now grown up to inherit the land. And now Moses both encourages them and tells them what they are to do in the Promised Land. Moses says:  
**5 “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.**  
**6 “Therefore be careful to observe them; *for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples* who will hear all these statutes, and say, *‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”***What do we see here? What is Moses telling them? He’s telling them that *they are being placed where they are to be an example to the nations around them.* He tells them that if they obey God’s commandments and laws, other peoples and nations around them will say, “What a great nation of wise and understanding people these Israelites are!” He put them there to be an example to others to show that God’s way of life works and brings great blessings!

But why this particular strip of land that today is about 150 miles north to south and about 30 to 50 miles east to west? Why this particular spot? To understand that, we need to look at a map. Or even better, a color satellite photo like this one of the Middle East.

What’s the first thing that jumps out at you when you look at this? The tan-colored areas are desert. What does that mean? Your travel options are severely limited in that part of the world. You just don't travel across the desert if you can help it because the chances are you may likely die.

What else do you notice about this satellite photo? You see parts of how many continents? You see Africa to the south, Asia to the east, and Europe to the north—parts of three continents. Where is Israel or the Promised Land in relation to these three continents? *It’s at the intersection of these three continents*—Africa to the south, Asia to the east, and Europe to the north. So if you’re going from one of these areas to another, and you can’t get there by ship because in those days they didn’t have seagoing ships to safely go from one of these areas to another, *you walked—*either on foot or on horseback or donkey-back or camel-back.

And if you’re walking from one of these areas to another, where are you going to go? What route are you going to take? You have to go through the Promised Land, the land of Israel. Let’s focus in on this area more closely. Where is Israel? It’s this little green strip along the Mediterranean coast. What’s all this tan-colored area? It’s desert. Much of it is just miles and miles and miles of sand dunes. But you can also see these dark brown areas in the desert, and those are mountains—mountains in the desert. Except for occasional camel caravans and wandering Bedouin and a few shepherds, these desert areas are impassible, even to this day.

Now where were the big empires of the ancient world? There was Egypt, one superpower, all along the Nile River, which is this long strip of green and the Nile Delta to the north joining the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt was called a kingdom that was 600 miles long and a mile wide—referring to the Nile River and the fields it watered and fertilized. So it was one ancient superpower.

Who were the other ancient superpowers and where were they located? The two primary ones were the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire. Where were they located? They were in Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers—the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which if your eyes are really good you can actually see on this satellite photo. You can also see this darker area with some green between the rivers. This is in modern-day Iraq, which is where most of the ancient empires of Assyria and Babylon were located.

There was also the Hittite Empire, up here in what is today Turkey, before the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, and later the Medo-Persian Empire, centered over here in what is today Iran. And later would come the Greek and Roman Empires to the northwest in Europe. So these ancient empires, some of which like the Egyptian Empire and Hittite Empire predated the Israelites, had trade and communication networks with each other and the smaller nations in between. And where did those networks go? Right through the Promised Land, the location where God placed Israel.

And when they weren’t trading with each other, what were these ancient empires doing? They were *fighting* with each other. And when they were fighting each other, where did their armies march? Right through the Promised Land, the location where God placed Israel. So you had to go through this little strip of green along the Mediterranean coast, the Promised Land. It was the *only* passable area. It was also the only place you could get food and water for you and your animals in this region so you wouldn’t starve to death or die of thirst on your journey.

Where did God choose to put Israel? He put them *at the crossroads of the world.* He put them in the most valuable stretch of real estate in the ancient world—where not just the smaller nations like the Syrians and Phoenicians and Moabites and Ammonites who were their immediate neighbors would see their example, but also the ancient superpowers like Egypt and Assyria and Babylon and later Greece and Rome. And He put them there *to be an example of His way of life.* God put His people Israel at the crossroads of the world to be a model nation to other nations. He put them at the single most important spot on earth so other nations would come into contact with them and see their example.

Does this remind you of a scripture? What about **5:14-16?  
14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.  
15 “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.  
16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**God has always used that principle. He wants His people to be lights and examples of His way of life so that others will be attracted to it and want to learn more about it. It was true of ancient Israel, and it’s true of God’s spiritual Israel today, the Church.

But what does this have to do with Jesus being in Capernaum? We’ve talked about how since very ancient times the traders and armies marched back and forth between Egypt and Mesopotamia going right through this area. But did they just wander across the landscape here? No, because there were hills and valleys and mountains and swamps and deep gulches and rivers that they had to go around. So there was a road, a specific path that they followed. To those of the ancient world, it was a superhighway, like I-70 or I-25 are to us today. It was the main route of trade and commerce, and it had places like motels or campgrounds to stop and spend the night and get a meal and food and water for your animals. This is the route of this ancient road that was used for thousands of years.

It was so important that it’s even referred to in Scripture in at least two places. The first is an indirect reference that we find in **1 Kings 9:15,** talking about the first steps Solomon took when he became king after his father David. He drafted a large labor force, and this is what he did:  
**15 And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.**So Solomon used this labor force for building the temple, for building his palace, for building the city walls and infrastructure of Jerusalem, and for fortifying and expanding the cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. Why those three particular cities? Here’s where they are on a map. All three of them were choke points along this international highway. That would be like saying Solomon built a military fort at the intersection of I-70 and I-25 in Denver, and at Eisenhower Tunnel and Vail Pass. By doing that he could control the travel along that highway. He could collect taxes from the merchants using that route, and he could also control the military access to his kingdom from these choke points. Megiddo is the most fought-over piece of real estate in human history. Why? Because it was a fortress-city that controlled access to a narrow valley through which this international highway ran.

Where else is this international highway mentioned in Scripture? It’s mentioned in the prophecy we read earlier, of where the Messiah would appear. **Matthew 4:13-16, which is quoting** **Isaiah 9:1-2:  
13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:  
15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, *by the way of the sea,* beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:  
16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”**This ancient road was called “the way of the sea” because it ran along the Mediterranean coast in Israel and down the Mediterranean coast of Egypt to follow along the Nile to the heart of Egypt. Later it Roman times it came to be called the “Via Maris,” which is Latin for “way of the sea”—*via* meaning road or route or way and *Maris* meaning “sea,” as in “maritime” or “mariner,” a sailor. The way of the sea ran through the tribal allotment of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Notice on this map where the road ran. Where is it in relation to the Sea of Galilee? Where is it in relation to Capernaum? *The road runs right by Capernaum.* What did that mean for Jesus’ ministry? As we talked about last time, the bulk of Jesus’ ministry was spent in a very small area bounded by the towns of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin. Where did the way of the sea go? Right by these three towns. What did this mean for Jesus Christ’s ministry?

It means that *He didn’t have to travel everywhere to get His message out.* Other people are travelling back and forth along this road all the time. People are going to hear of His miracles. People are going to hear of His message. It’s like it’s being done with big billboards right along the highway, because He knows word of mouth will spread the word. That’s why we see phrases in the Gospels like “And His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.”

So why did He make Capernaum the center of His ministry? For the same reason that God placed ancient Israel in that same area—so word of that way of life spread. So others would hear and of God’s truth. The very location itself would magnify and amplify the message and be sure that word would spread. It would be word-of-mouth. He wouldn’t have to reach all of the people himself. The fact that He’s doing His works and teachings in these towns right alongside the international highway insures that word will spread not just through Galilee but even beyond that to other nations.

And the same is true when He goes too Jerusalem for the Holy Days. He knows people will be there from all over the Roman Empire for the Holy Days, as we see at that first Pentecost in Acts 1, and the word will spread. They didn’t have TV and radio and magazines in that day. Word-of-mouth was their Internet. So He made sure that what He was doing would spread around the Internet of His day.

What are some of the lessons or takeaways we might learn from this? I jotted down three, and there are no doubt more.

1. God brings to pass what He has foretold. He prophesied that the Messiah would come not only to Galilee, but specifically to the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, and that’s exactly what happened with Jesus in Nazareth and Capernaum.

2. God is in perfect control and knows what He is doing. He didn’t allow Jesus to be captured and killed early like John the Baptizer, nor did He allow Him to be stoned to death in Nazareth, or face danger from the pagan idol-worshipers on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, or get caught up in a rebellion from the Zealots, or taken captive by the Herodians. No, He allowed Him to escape from those dangers and settle into safety in Capernaum where He could carry out His ministry in an area where word of His teachings and miracles would spread far and wide.

3. God wants us to be examples to others of His way of life. He wanted that of ancient Israel, and He wants that from us. Israel failed miserably. How about us? Will we fail, or will we be the kind of lights and examples He wants to see?

Any questions?

Now we come to a portion of Scripture that some think is a contradiction, but it’s really not. We’re on page 17 at the heading “Jesus chooses Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John.” And some think this is a contradiction with what we covered considerably earlier on page 12 of the harmony, which covers John 1:35-51. And there we saw that two of the disciples of John the Baptizer were Andrew, Peter’s brother, and John (although John isn’t specifically named). They start following Jesus, and Jesus also invites Peter, Philip and Nathaniel to follow Him.

We tend to assume that Jesus called all 12 of the disciples, or apostles, all in a relatively short time, a few days or few weeks apart. But that’s just an assumption, and an incorrect one. Between those events recorded in John 1 and those we come to now, it’s possible that as much as a year has passed. A lot has happened. Jesus traveled to Cana in Galilee and turned water into wine. He traveled to Capernaum with his family. He went to Jerusalem at the Passover and overturned the money-changers’ tables. He met with Nicodemus. He stayed in Judea for a while, with His disciples baptizing people.

John the Baptizer is imprisoned, and Jesus leaves Judea and travels through Samaria, meeting the woman at the well and teaching in Sychar. Then He starts teaching in various synagogues in Galilee. Then in Cana He heals the son of a royal official in Capernaum. Then He goes to Nazareth and is rejected and almost stoned to death. Then He moves to Capernaum. So were those same disciples with Him all of this time, which again may have been around a year?

Obviously not. Maybe they started following Him when they were down in Judea, but when He returned to Galilee they took some time off to go back to their livelihoods as fishermen—which, incidentally, is exactly what they did after Jesus was crucified several years later. These men are simply not converted yet. It appears that they were more or less part-time disciples when Jesus initially invited them to follow Him, but now it’s really serious. Now Jesus is calling them to leave everything to follow Him, as we see mentioned in the text here. Now it’s decision time for sure. It’s all or nothing.

We also know that Jesus invited others to be disciples, and we know that some disciples stopped following Him because of some of the things He said and taught. So we shouldn’t assume that there was only one fixed group of disciples who were with Him throughout His ministry. Some came, some left, and we see from Acts chapter one that two men, Justus and Matthias, were with Jesus through most of His ministry and they chose between the two of them to find a replacement for Judas, and yet we never see their names mentioned in the Gospels. So we simply don’t have all of the information about who was where when.

So let’s pick up the story here in **Mark 1:16-20,** and I’ll just read Mark instead of Matthew since Mark includes a little more detail.

**16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.**

**17 Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”**

**18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.**

**19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.**

**20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.**

The Harmony of the Gospels which I patterned ours after, and some others, put these accounts by Matthew, Mark and Luke together as though it’s the same account. Matthew and Mark are clearly describing the same incidents, but Luke has enough differences in detail that he may be describing something different, but at essentially the same time. So let’s read Luke’s account:

**Luke 5:1-11**

**1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,**

**2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.**

**3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.**

This sounds odd to us, but it actually makes a lot of sense. If you’ve been out on a boat, you know that sound travels very well over water. Notice that Jesus has a large crowd surrounding Him wanting to hear Him teach, so he spots two boats, one belonging to Simon Peter, and asks Peter to row out a little bit from the shore so he can speak to the crowd from the boat and all of them can hear Him better. So Peter does this until Jesus finished speaking, and then Jesus tells Peter to do something.

**4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”**

**5 But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”**

Here we see an interesting detail. When had Peter and his fellow fishermen been fishing? They had fished all night. They caught nothing at all, brought their boats to shore in the morning, then hauled their nets out and were washing and repairing them and letting their nets dry out because if you left them wadded up and wet they would start to rot and rip and tear the next time you used them. So they were washing them, making any repairs the nets needed, and laying them out to dry before using them again the next night.

Why were they fishing at night rather than in the day? I’ll give you a hint: What color were their nets? The nets were made out of linen. What color is linen?

Their nets are white—or at least light-colored. So they fish at night why? Because the fish can’t see the nets at night. They can sneak up on them. What happens when you’re fishing with light-colored nets in the daytime? The fish see your nets coming and swim away!

So Jesus tells Peter to drop the nets anyway, and Peter, probably out of respect for Jesus, does it even though he knows there’s no way it will work. Continuing in verse 6—

**6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.**

**7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.**

So the miracle here is on several levels. First, to catch anything at all in the daytime with these light-colored linen nets is a something of a miracle because normally the fish would see them coming and swim away. But to catch so many fish under these conditions, in the middle of the day, is also a miracle. And it’s such a great miracle that they run the risk of both boats sinking from the weight of all the fish!

**8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”**

Why does Peter have this reaction? Put yourself in his sandals. Peter is a fisherman. He’s been fishing for years. He knows this lake like the back of his hand. He’s fished all night and caught nothing. All he wants to do is go to bed and get a few hours of sleep before he goes out fishing again that night. But this rabbi, this former stonemason who knows nothing about fishing, tells him to go further out on the lake where the water is deeper and through out his nets—and in broad daylight, of all things, when it’s useless to fish because the fish can see the nets, and what happens?

He gets what was probably the biggest haul of fish he’d ever seen in his life. And his immediate reaction is, “I’m way out of my league here! No mere human being could do this!” He knows a miracle has taken place. He also knows that if Jesus can do this and get what might’ve been weeks’ worth of fish in one cast of the net, what else could He do? He’s been a fisherman all his life, yet he has just been out-fished by someone who may have never gone fishing in His entire life. He is blown away, and all he can say is that he doesn't’ even deserve to be in the presence of a Man like this.

**9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;**

**10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.**

Apparently James and John were in the other boat that came out to help them, and they had some kind of business partnership.

**And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”**

**11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.**

So now, as it says here, they do forsake all to follow Jesus. It’s no longer a come-and-go or part-time thing following Jesus. Now it’s all or nothing. Now they’re in it all the way. And as we’ll see later, Peter, James and John become the three disciples who are closest to Jesus, you might say His inner circle.

How do we reconcile these two accounts—Luke compared with Matthew and Mark? I think there are two possible explanations. One is that they are two entirely different events, which is possible given the differences, or it’s also possible that Luke’s account happens first, and then Matthew and Mark are both giving a broad overview of the events and speaking in very general terms—that Jesus is one the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He meets up with Peter and Andrew who have been fishing casting nets into the sea, and then everything Luke describes fits in here next, with the end result that Jesus tells Peter and Andrew and then James and John to follow Him as His disciples, and they all then leave everything, including their father and hired servants and boats, and follow Jesus for the duration of His ministry.

I’m not sure which I would go with. The bottom line is that with both we end up at the same place, with Peter, Andrew, James and John all forsaking everything to follow Jesus full-time after this—and that’s the key point that all three writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are making.

Any questions? We’ll wrap it up here for now.

Next time we’ll talk about an interesting phrase—that Jesus taught as one having authority. That phrase has a specific meaning in Hebrew as it relates to rabbis. And we’ll see that Jesus was a very special kind of rabbi, and what that means for us. We’ll talk about that and some other things next time.

**Mark 1:21-28**

**21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.**

**22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

**23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,**

**24 saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”**

**25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!”**

**26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.**

**27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”**

**28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.**

**Matthew 21:23-27**

**23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”**

**24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:**

**25 “The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men?” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’**

**26 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.”**

**27 So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.**

**Matthew 28:18-20**

**18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

**19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**

**20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.**