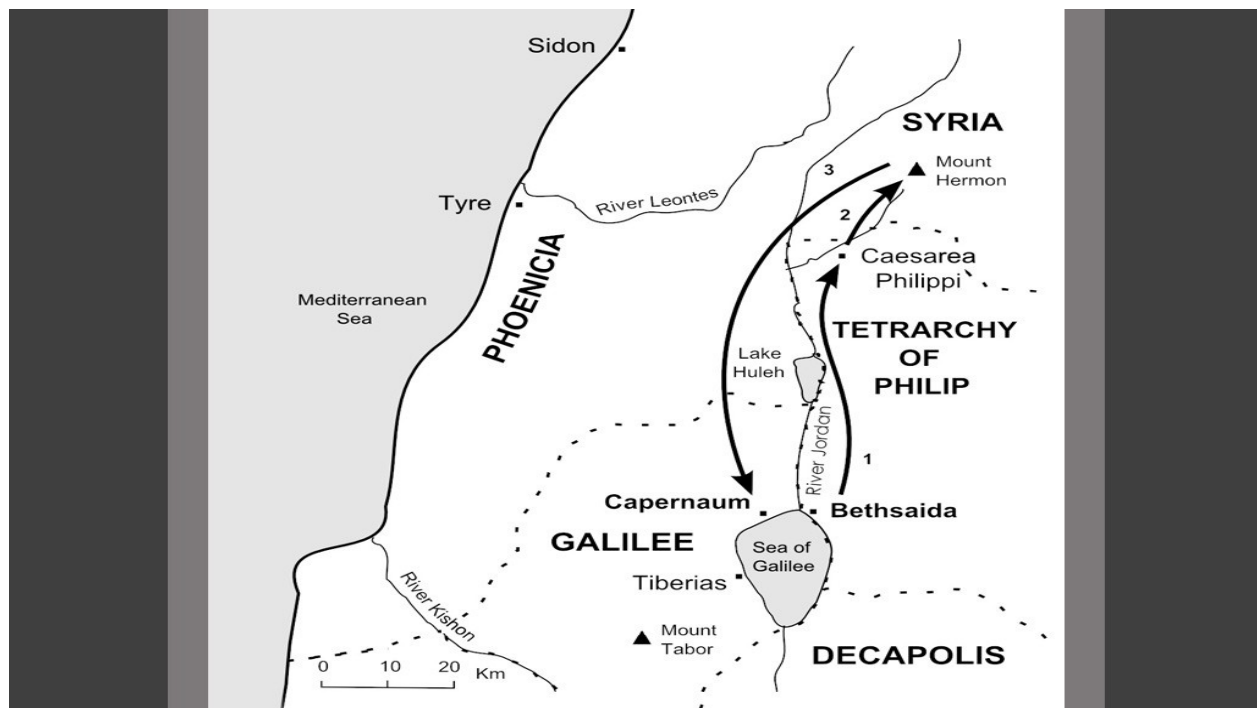


1. **Introduction:** Jesus and the twelve abruptly left the Pharisees in Dalmanutha, which is south of Capernaum on the west side of the lake. They went by boat to Bethsaida Julias on the northeast coast.
  - Near Bethsaida is the area where the feeding of the 5000 occurred.
2. **Mark 8:22-25:** *“And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.”* <sup>23</sup>*And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”* <sup>24</sup>*And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”* <sup>25</sup>*Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”*
  - Rome gave Bethsaida to Herod the Great. At his death, his son Philip became Tetrarch of the area. He enlarged and beautified Bethsaida and renamed Bethsaida Julias in honor of the emperor Augustus’ daughter Julia.
  - When Jesus arrived in Bethsaida, some people assisted a blind man to come before Jesus. The helpers begged Jesus to touch him so that he might see.
  - Jesus did heal the blind man, but the healing was different than expected.
  - It is interesting that the several healings of the blind recorded in the gospels are all differ in the details. Jesus deals individually with each situation.
  - Though there were people helping the blind man, Jesus took the man by the hand and walked with him to a private area. The personal touch and attention demonstrated Jesus’ personal concern for the man.
  - To begin the healing process, Jesus spat on the man’s eyes signifying to him in a way he could perceive that Jesus was healing him. Jesus also laid His hands on the man giving him another sign of healing.
  - Jesus then asked the man if he could see anything? The man responded he could see something he perceived as persons, but they looked like trees walking. Since trees don’t move around, he inferred it must be people.
  - Jesus always completes His work. He laid hands on the man’s eyes. Opening his eyes wide and focusing, the man could now see normally.
  - Why this healing process was done in two stages is not explained. It was certainly not that Jesus lacked power. It must have been of value to the man. Maybe his dim seeing of Jesus reminded him what Jesus was doing.
3. **Mark 8:26:** *“And he sent him to his home, saying, ‘Do not even enter the village.’”*
  - The reason for this command was likely two-fold. First to avoid attracting a larger crowd. Also, to give the man time to reflect on the blessing he received.
  - Later, they left Bethsaida *“...Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.”* (**Mark 8:27a**)



- While walking to *Caesarea Philippi*, Jesus questioned the disciples.
- 4. **Mark 8:27b-28:** *“And on the way he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that I am?’<sup>28</sup> And they told him, ‘John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’”*
  - This is a vital question. What the people who heard Jesus and saw His miracles concluded about Him? Jesus didn’t begin by asking for the disciples’ opinion about Him. He lets them initially think about what others are saying.
  - Their answer was people believe Jesus to be a powerful messenger from God.
  - In Luke, the answer is, *“that one of the prophets of old has risen.”*
  - The people were convinced Jesus’ power had a divine origin but believed it was displayed in some powerful man of God who had died and was now risen in the person of Jesus.
  - The surprising and strange thing is no one suggested that Jesus might be the Messiah (except John the Baptist). Why? Most likely because the anticipated Messiah was to be a warrior who would free Israel from foreign control.
  - Jesus, in no way, reflected that picture. He worked miracles and taught, but no sign of exercising strength to free the country from Roman occupation.
  - They concluded that Jesus is from God and a mighty man like prophets of old.
  - Jesus then asked a second question. The disciples were in intimate daily contact with Jesus, His ministry, and teaching. What do they think?
- 5. **Mark 8:29:** *“And he asked them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered him, ‘You are the Christ.’”*
  - Peter gives the answer for the group. *“You are the Christ.”*

- At this point, we need the additional information available in the parallel passage in Matthew 16.
  - Matthew records the answer to the first question to be the same as Mark's.
  - But Matthew's record of the answer to the second question includes more detail than Mark as well as including an important added comment from Jesus.
6. **Matthew 16:15-10:** *"He (Jesus) said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'"*
- Because Roman Catholics and Protestants interpret Jesus' comment to Peter very differently, we will look at it in detail. Also, not all Protestants agree on the interpretation of Jesus' comment to Peter.
  - We will consider the meaning segment by segment.
  - Some points on which interpretations disagree are:
    - (1.) What or who is the rock on which Jesus says He will build His church?
    - (2.) What does Jesus mean by the "gates of hell?"
    - (3.) What is meant by Jesus' promise to give Peter the keys of the kingdom?
    - (4.) What does Jesus mean by the "binding/loosening" promise?
  - Not everything in this passage led to differing interpretations. All agree that Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ identifies Jesus as the Messiah and identifying Jesus as *"the Son of the living God"* recognizes His divinity.
  - The combination of these truths makes Peter's statement vitally important.
  - Jesus is Messiah. He is divine. He is God Himself come to save His people.
  - Peter was a person who sometime blurted out things that were quite wrong.
  - Jesus underlines the truth and importance of this statement by Peter saying, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."*
  - Saying Peter is Simon, the son of Jonah identifies Peter as just a man. His startling knowledge came from a specific divine revelation.
  - That is true for every Christian. Knowing with certainty that Jesus is the Son of God comes to each of us by the work of the Holy Spirit bringing to us a specific divine revelation at the beginning of our journey with Jesus.
  - If we believe, it is because God revealed that knowledge to us. He blesses us by bringing us from spiritual death to life in Christ. In the same way He blessed Peter. Salvation is all God's work from beginning to end. Praise God!

- Now consider the questions about this passage one-by-one. (1.) What or who is the rock on which Jesus says He will build His church?
  - Roman Catholics say Peter is the rock. The dominant Protestant view is that Peter's confession is the rock. ***"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*** Some Protestants believe that Jesus Himself is the Rock.
  - I personally agree with James Montgomery Boice that Jesus is the Rock.
  - I reach that conclusion by asking how did Peter himself understand Jesus' words. Peter before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8-12) does not in any way suggest he is the rock on which the church is built. Instead, he insists Jesus Christ is the foundation stone. More insight is given in 1Peter 2:4-8.
7. **1 Peter 2:4-6**: ***"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup>you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."***
- The foundation stone is Jesus Christ. If Christians are "living stones," it is because the foundation on which they rest is Jesus who imparts life.
  - Next, the second question. (2.) What does Jesus mean by ***"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."***
  - This appears to mean that despite attacks of all kinds, the church will survive and all the "chosen" will be gathered in. This optimism has two underlying reasons. First, Jesus the man-God is its foundation and protector.
  - Secondly, the church is composed of people sovereignly chosen by God before the foundation of the earth. What God ordains will happen.
  - The third puzzling question is "What is meant by Jesus' promise to give to Peter the keys of the kingdom?"
  - As we have seen, Peter was not the rock on which the church is built, but he did have a very important role to play.
8. **Matthew 16:19**: Jesus says to Peter, ***"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."***
- Three prominent interpretations have been given to this promise.
  - (1.) The Roman Catholic Church position is that Peter and his successors were given the authority to receive or exclude individual people from salvation. There is no salvation apart from the church.
  - That means that excommunication from the fellowship of the church severs a person from the Body of Christ. A person dying in that state goes to hell. Priests have authority over their flock, but the ultimate authority is the Pope.

- (2.) The Protestant position is that ministers have authority to pronounce forgiveness of sins to those who repent of sin and place their trust in Christ.
- This position is expressed in the part of Protestant services where sin is confessed, and pardon is declared. We recognize that position every Sunday.
- The Heidelberg catechism asks in question 84, *“How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the gospel?”*
- **Answer:** *“By proclaiming and openly witnessing according to the command of Christ, to believers one and all, that whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ’s merits; and on the contrary, by proclaiming and witnessing to all unbelievers and such as do not sincerely repent that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abide on them so long as they are not converted.”*
- (3.) The third major interpretation. Peter used the keys by opening the door of the gospel to Jews by his preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2), and by opening the door of the gospel to Gentiles by his preaching in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). This is a minority Protestant view. It is held by one of my favorite people, John Stott. He talks about it in commentary on Acts 10.
- After Jesus hears Peter’s statement and responds to it, Jesus asks the disciples to not to tell anyone He is the Christ.

9. **Mark 8:30:** *“And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.”*

- The antagonism of the Herodians, the Pharisee, and the Scribes against Him mean that Jesus had to manage public perception of Himself carefully to keep His message and His primary mission on track.
- The religious leaders of Israel had prepared the people for a very different kind of Messiah than that promised by the Old Testament.
- The Israelites wanted the kind of Messiah who would gather a great following, deal with corrupt Jerusalem, raise an army free them from Rome, and lead them into a time of unprecedented prosperity.
- Religious leaders and the people overlooked OT passages predicting Messiah’s suffering for His people (Is. 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:1-11, 52:13-53:12).
- Jesus’ primary mission was of a much different nature and would be at all times beneficial to all people who believed in Him.

10. We will begin next lesson with Mark 8:31.