

Mark 7:31-37 “The fellow Jesus caused to speak plainly”

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Mark 7:31-37 NIV

“Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.

“³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. ³³After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. ³⁴He looked up to heaven

and with a deep sigh said to him,

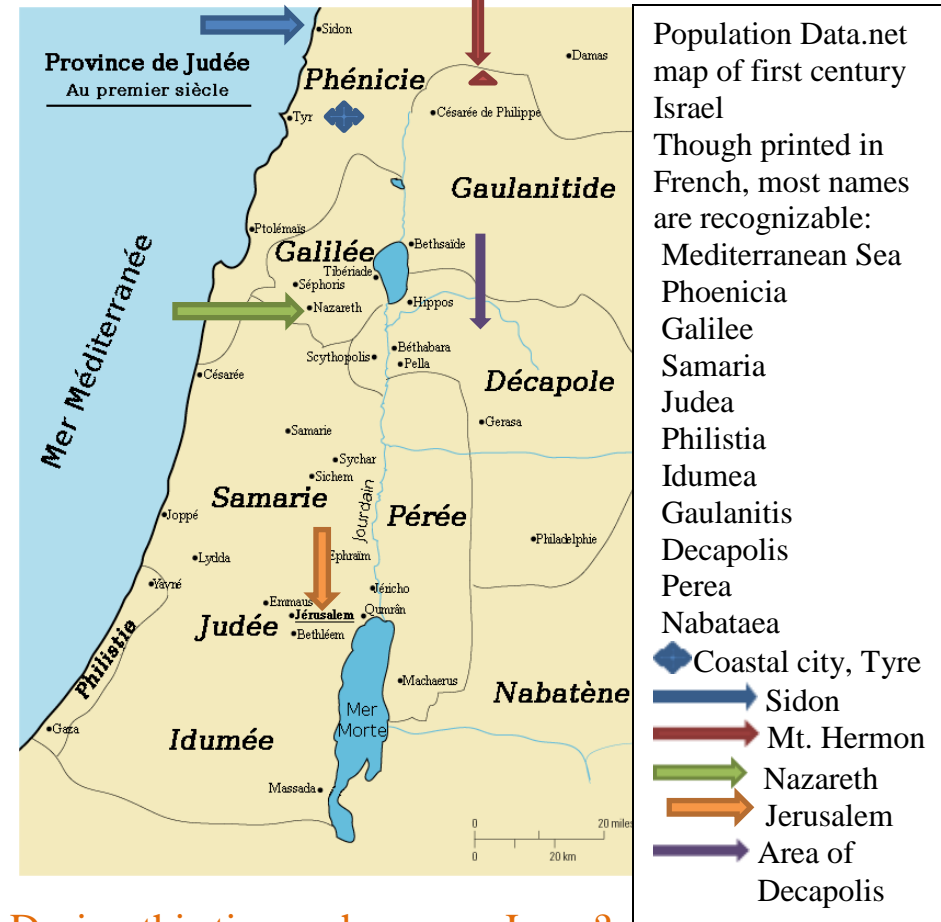
‘*Ephphatha!*’ (which means ‘Be opened!’).

“³⁵At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷People were overwhelmed with amazement. ‘He has done everything well,’ they said. ‘He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.’”

Mystery surrounds how Jesus spent a major portion of his life.

Some call this 18 year period, the “silent years.”

From the age of 12, when he visited the Jerusalem Temple with his parents, until age 30, when he began preaching, the four Gospels report zilch.



During this time, where was Jesus?

What was he doing?

Some speculate that Jesus traveled to India, Tibet, Persia, or China to meet with great philosophers.

The gospels say nothing directly, but they give some clues.

E.g., Mark’s Gospel states that the people of Nazareth recognized Jesus as a fellow townsman. They also knew Joseph, Mary, and Jesus’ siblings.

In fact, they knew Jesus’ brothers by name.¹

That’s why reports coming from other cities and towns of Jesus’ well-established and credible miracles, left townspeople incredulous.

They thought they knew this man well.

How could this ordinary, local town guy do miracles?

Mark tells us how townspeople reacted when Jesus came back to Nazareth after his first preaching tour: “When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. ‘Where did this man get these things?’ they asked. ‘What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?’³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?’ And they took offense at him.”²

This text and other Bible evidence lead me to think Jesus remained in Nazareth until just before he began his preaching ministry at age 30.

Had Jesus gone away to school in Jerusalem or sat at the feet of a famous rabbi as did the Apostle Paul, they wouldn’t have been amazed.

If a local scholar studies at Harvard, Stanford, or MIT and then gains fame, we tend to expect the student’s greatness.

Jesus stayed in Nazareth, however, building homes, repairing roofs, or whatever builders did in those times.

The Greek word *tekton* often translated as carpenter means a builder or craftsman.

Jesus then went away for likely less than a year teaching, choosing his disciples, and performing miracles—works he never did in Nazareth.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth, the local folks couldn’t believe he could do such things.

Can we explain the change in Jesus?

I think so.

As Luke 2:49 reveals, at 12 years of age, Jesus realized that he must do his Father’s business.

He had to God’s will and live as an example.

As a Jew, Jesus had to completely obey all Ten Commandments.

- That means he honored God the Father and he kept the Sabbath.
- Jesus also obeyed and respected his parents, Mary and Joseph (**Luke 2:51**), “He continued in subjection to them.”

¹ Matthew 13:53-58, Luke 4:14-30,

² Mark 6:1-3 NASB

- He kept the Ten Commandments and as a subject of Rome, he obeyed Rome’s laws, too.

Jesus was the first of at least eight children.

You from large families know that the elder children usually have to help the parents ride herd on the younger children.

After Norma (one of six children) turned 13, her parents had two more kids.

As a teen, she helped rear a younger brother and sister from the time they were born.

Jesus had four younger brothers and at least three little sisters and likely helped oversee them.

He continued in subjection to his parents.

The fact that the Nazareth townspeople recognized Jesus as the *carpenter* indicates that Joseph possibly died by this time and that Jesus worked to support Mary and his siblings.

No social security, welfare programs, or life insurance existed at the time.

Above all other things, Jesus subjected himself to God—to his Heavenly Father.

Those obligations gave him a challenging load.

After his resurrection and before he ascended, Jesus told the disciples: “all things . . . written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,” (Luke 24:44 NAS

The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (*Psalms*) were the three divisions in Jewish Bibles.

They included the *Old Testament* books found in Protestant Bibles today, but not the *Apocrypha*.

I picture Jesus spending a lot of time at the Nazareth synagogue during those 18 years from 12-30 reading *Old Testament* books-scrolls to learn what all God wanted him to fulfill.

Before he could fulfill those Scriptures, Jesus first had to learn them.

You can’t finish a job unless you know all the duties.

After he’d been away preaching for a while, Jesus worshiped at the Nazareth synagogue, asked for and unrolled the Isaiah scroll to chapter 61:1, 2.

He read it to those attending, telling them he was fulfilling that very prophecy (see Luke 4:18, 19).

Not Isaiah or any *OT* book had chapter or verse separations then, so Jesus knew the book well.

I’ve known experienced SS teachers who could not even tell you where Isaiah is located in the Bible.

This incident is one of the reasons I think Jesus spent those 18 years preparing (one doesn’t become Bible proficient in a couple of years).

He prayed (he prayed all night before chose the 12).

He talked constantly with his heavenly Father.

Taking care of his family responsibilities, Jesus worked as a builder.

Jesus completed what God wanted him to achieve.

Our text tells of Jesus’ long trip north, preaching in mostly Gentile regions.

He visited the coastal cities, Tyre and Sidon, ancient Phoenician ports.

Tyre won fame for ship building, foreign trade, and its highly skilled sailors.

Scholars ask why Jesus took this extended trip that must have taken several days.

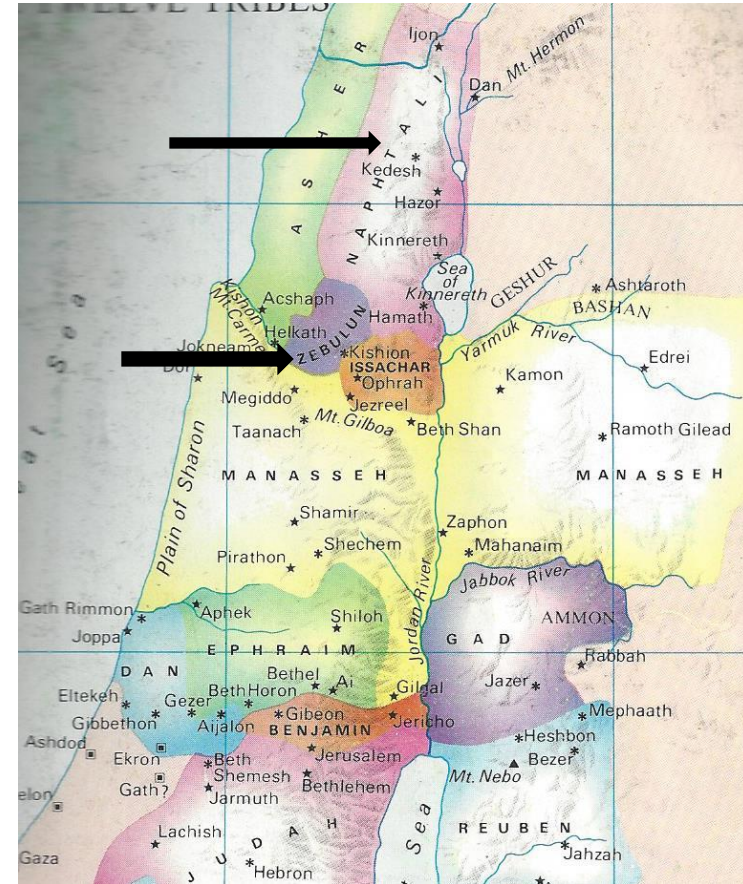
Fulfilling *Old Testament* prophecy required Jesus to take this journey.

Before we join Jesus on his tour, note this passage in Isaiah 9:1 (NASB).

“But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.”

The following map shows the land allocations for Israel’s 12 tribes in the Promised Land.

Arrows point to the areas Zebulun and Naphtali received. Lake Galilee was known as the Sea of Kinnereth at that time.



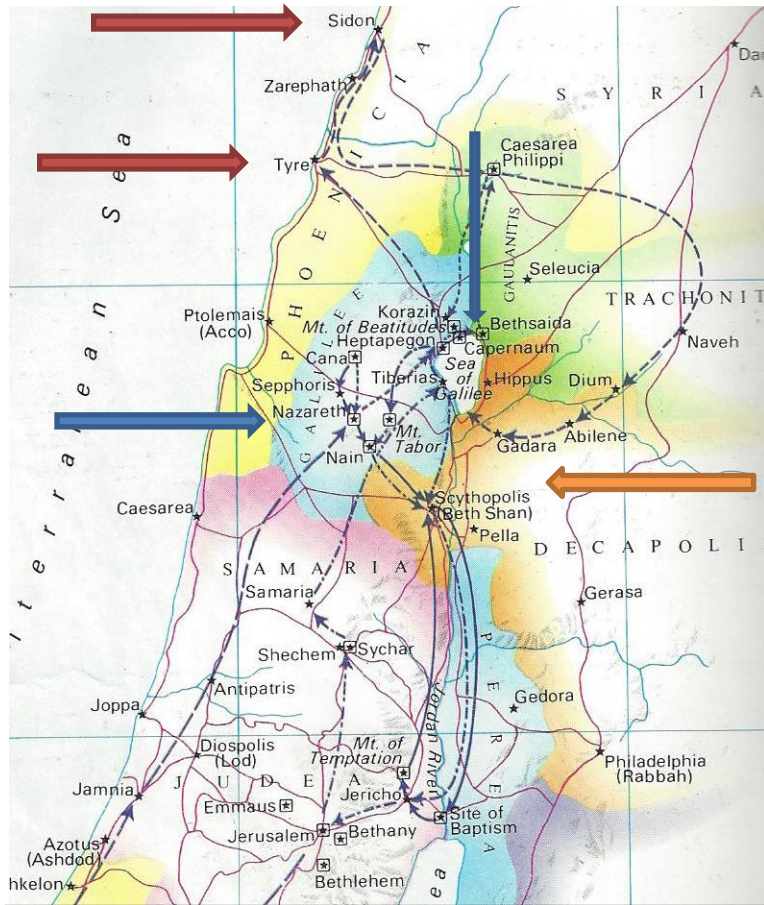
Mostly we hear about the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh; rarely Zebulun and Naphtali.

Perhaps you know about Zebulon Pike, who two years after Lewis and Clark set out to explore the Northwest, began a Southwest expedition.

They named a tall Colorado mountain peak after Zebulon Pike.

In Bible times, Zebulun and Naphtali seemed neglected. 1 Chronicles’ lineage says little of them.

As Isaiah predicted, God changed the cities’ shame into glory.



Note locations of Nazareth, Capernaum, & Decapolis

Compare the “12 tribe” map with the one above, and you see Nazareth’s location in Zebulun’s tribal area and Capernaum, Jesus’ 2nd home, in Naphtali’s.

Recall also this Isaiah’s prediction in Isaiah 9:1: “by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” See also Matthew 4:12-16.

The Decapolis area, located southeast of Lake Galilee was largely Gentile (Greek and Roman).

Decapolis is Greek for “ten cities.”

Isaiah 42 begins with another prophecy:

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”

This 700 BC prediction by Isaiah refers to Jesus bringing life to people of all nations and races.

We lack time today to comment on other predictions Isaiah made, but check out the end of verse 4: “And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.”

Tyre and Sidon are both coastal cities.

See their locations on our map.

For some reason, the NIV translates islands here, but the NASB and NRSV rightly use coastlands.

Jesus spent his brief life thinking of others—including living and dying for you and me.

I pray that our tongues can be loosed from their hesitancy to declare God’s wonders in his Word and honor his Son, who lived perfectly among us.