

The Early Ministry of Jesus

Spread of the fame of Jesus

The news about Jesus spread as He began His ministry going throughout Galilee preaching, teaching, healing those with disease and casting out demons ([Matt 4:23-25](#); [9:35](#); [Mk 1:28, 39](#); [Lk 4:14-15, 37](#); [5:15](#)). People came from near and far for healing and to hear what He had to say. His message was a continuation of what John the Baptist had been saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt 4:17](#); [Mk 1:14-15](#)). Nothing like this had ever been seen or heard!

Jesus frequently taught in local synagogues but large crowds followed wherever He went so He often taught in open spaces and could no longer enter a city ([Mk 1:45](#)). But Jesus denounced some of the cities where most of His miracles were done because they did not repent ([Matt 11:20-24](#)).

Jesus had significant contact with some other than His disciples. First of all is Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night and was taught that he must be born again; that God send His only begotten Son into the world so that those who believe in Him might be saved ([John 3:1-21](#)). He also met a woman of Samaria and offered her living water. The episode resulted in many from her town believing in Him ([John 4:1-42](#)).

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| • Read Mark 1:22 | How was Jesus different from other teachers? |
| • Read Mark 1:35-38 | How does this speak to the importance of prayer? |
| • Read Mark 1:23-25 | Explain the statement of the unclean spirit and the response of Jesus |

Recruitment of disciples and initiation of their training

Jesus recruited disciples early in His ministry from various walks of life. They saw the miracles of Jesus and heard His teaching as they went from town to town throughout Galilee ([Matt 4:18-22](#); [9:9-13](#); [Mk 1:16-20](#); [2:14-17](#); [Lk 5:1-11, 27-32](#); [John 1:35-51](#)).

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| • Read Matt 8:23-27 | What lesson did the disciples learn from this? |
| • Read Matt 4:18-22; 9:9 | How could they drop everything to follow Jesus? |
| • Read John 4:27-38 | What could the disciples learn from this passage? |

Growing resentment among the Jewish leadership

As news about Jesus spread it eventually caught the attention of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. They particularly took notice and questioned His authority when Jesus drove out of the Temple the money changers and those that were selling animals for sacrifice ([John 2:13-22](#)). Another issue that the Jews questioned was His eating with tax collectors and sinners ([Matt 9:10-13](#); [Mk 2:15-17](#); [Lk 5:29-32](#)). When Jesus cast out demons they claimed that it was by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons ([Matt 9:32-34](#)). However, their main accusations against Jesus were that He violated the Sabbath ([Matt 12:1-14](#); [Mk 2:23-3:6](#); [Lk 6:1-11](#); [John 5:1-16](#)) and that He claimed to be the Son of God ([Matt 12:1-14](#); [Mk 2:23-3:6](#); [Lk 6:1-11](#); [John 5:1-16](#)).

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| • Read Mark 2:1-12 | Explain the complaint of the scribes and the response of Jesus |
| • Read Mark 2:15-17 | Explain the response of Jesus |
| • Read Matt 12:1-14 | Explain the inflexibility of the Pharisees |

APPENDIX

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Read Mark 1:22 How was Jesus different from other teachers?

The scribes taught based on their understanding of the traditions from scripture that had been handed down over generations. Jesus, as the Son of God, taught based on His knowledge as the author of the scriptures. The difference was apparently amazing as Jesus spoke with complete authority. He spoke the truth using illustrations that dealt with matters of significance for their daily lives. The teaching of the scribes was a distorted, contradictory, corrupted version of the truth which confused and burdened the people.

Read Mark 1:35-38 How does this speak to the importance of prayer?

Prayer was an integral part of the life of Jesus and an important subject throughout the gospels. Jesus prayed before choosing the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12), after the feeding of the 5,000 (Mk 6:46), before Jesus was transfigured (Lk 9:28), before teaching the disciples the Lord's prayer (Lk 11:1) and on many other occasions. Why should I neglect prayer when considering the importance that Jesus placed on it?

Read Mark 1:23-25 Explain the statement of the unclean spirit and the response of Jesus

The unclean spirit in this passage clearly knew who Jesus was. Even Satan referred to Jesus as the Son of God when tempting Him ([Matt 4:3](#)). Other encounters that Jesus had with demons provide the same information that demons knew that Jesus was the Son of God ([Matt 8:28-29](#); [Mk 1:34](#); [Lk 4:41](#)). In these encounters Jesus ordered the demons to be quiet. In His early ministry Jesus seemed to desire that the knowledge of who He was be kept limited. Perhaps the concern was a premature attempt by the people to make Him king ([John 6:15](#)).

Read Matt 8:23-27 What lesson did the disciples learn from this?

What Jesus did was beyond the capability of any human. The disciples recognized this and wondered who was in their midst. Certainly Jesus was not like them. We know that Jesus was not only human but was also fully God. That understanding was beginning to take shape in the minds of the disciples and their faith was growing.

Read Matt 4:18-22; 9:9 How could they drop everything to follow Jesus?

Most likely this was not the first encounter of Jesus with these men. It seems that Andrew and possibly John were disciples of John the Baptist and switched to Jesus based on John's testimony ([John 1:35-42](#)). The passage in John (19-42) involves three days during which Jesus was apparently there as well in Bethany beyond the Jordan. The passage in Matthew probably spoke of events that occurred at a later time when by the Sea of Galilee. The understanding that Jesus might be the Messiah was undoubtedly already on their radar justifying their apparent sudden departure from their fishing trade.

Read John 4:27-38 What could the disciples learn from this passage?

There were several things that the disciples could have learned by this situation.

- The disciples arrived to see that Jesus had been speaking with a woman. If they had arrived earlier they would have interrupted the conversation. If they had arrived later they would have missed the conversation and the opportunity to learn. The disciples were amazed that Jesus spoke to her because it was culturally inappropriate for a rabbi to talk to a woman in public yet they didn't ask Jesus why, or what He wanted from her. This shows us that Jesus was concerned about all people, including those in society that were considered less important or insignificant. This was new ground for the disciples but should be normal for us.
- The woman told the people in town about Jesus and convinced them to check it out. She couldn't keep what she learned to herself and had to tell everyone she knew. Are we motivated to do the same?
- In response to the disciples concern about food Jesus pointed out that His focus was on doing God's will; "to accomplish His work." The disciples were speaking literally while Jesus was speaking metaphorically as He had just been speaking to the woman about living water that would satisfy her soul. He went on to speak of a spiritual harvest that was ready, possibly referring to the people of Sychar who were on their way to them in response to the woman's testimony. Jesus used an example of crops to point out that there is time between planting and reaping and that the spiritual harvest was ready due to the labor of others who had planted. So, what is your role; planting, cultivating, or reaping the spiritual harvest? Do you have the same focus about this as Jesus?

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Read Mark 2:1-12 Explain the complaint of the scribes and the response of Jesus

Jesus was confronted by a paralytic on a pallet who had been lowered through the roof to where Jesus was sitting. In response to the faith of the men who brought the paralytic Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." The scribes considered this blasphemy because only God can forgive sin. They did not consider that someone who could perform miracles might be God Himself, the promised Messiah. Jesus knew their thoughts and responded by saying that he had the authority to forgive sin, that He was indeed God. He then proceeded to heal the man.

Read Mark 2:15-17 Explain the response of Jesus

The scribes and Pharisees grouped people in classes and refused to be with those they thought spiritually beneath them. In this passage those being considered were tax collectors and sinners. The tax collectors were despised because they were usually Jews who were doing the bidding of the Romans. The sinners were anyone who refused to follow their interpretation of the Law. When questioned why Jesus dined with those of low reputation He responded by saying that He came for the purpose of healing such people. He added that He did not come for righteous people, that is, not those who consider themselves righteous (i.e. the Pharisees).

Read Matt 12:1-14 Explain the inflexibility of the Pharisees

God established the pattern of six days of work followed by one day of rest ([Ex 20:8-11](#)) giving both people and animals a day of refreshment and recovery ([Ex 23:12](#)). Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, declared that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath and He gave three examples in this passage. The Pharisees had taken what was for the betterment of mankind and turned it into an oppressive and grievous restriction. It is true that breaking of the Sabbath called for the death penalty ([Ex 35:2](#)) but the response of the Pharisees revealed a legalistic mindset that was focused more on rules than compassion. What Jesus did was compassionate and consistent with the purpose of the Sabbath.