

# MARK

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## Lesson 7

## Mark Chapter 7

In this lesson, focused on Mark Chapter 7, Jesus and his followers are once again on the move. Opening the chapter, we see that they have returned to Capernaum. From here, Mark will follow Jesus through his confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees at his home base there, then travel north and west up to Tyre, and then on to Sidon, a seaport on the Mediterranean in Lebanon. From Sidon, Jesus and his disciples will cross back again to the east, staying well north of the Galilee region, then traveling down into the area of the Decapolis—the ten Roman cities, nine of which are located on the Jordan side of the Jordan river. I have included two pictures in this lesson, a picture I shared in an earlier lesson—the temple at Capernaum where Jesus taught—and a second one of the ruins at Beit She'an, the former Decapolis city of Scythopolis. It was at Beit She'an, on top of that mound, that the Philistines hung the body of Saul. The Romans rebuilt the city around 60 B.C.; and, by the time of Christ, it had become one of the ten cities of the Decapolis.

In the beginning of the chapter, Jesus points out a serious flaw in the teachings of the religious leaders. In doing so, he will again try to open the eyes and minds of his disciples who have been taught by these leaders. Following that teaching, we will travel with him to Syria, outside the land of Palestine, for the one and only time in Jesus' ministry; there, we will see him accomplish an unusual miracle. Following that, we will travel back across the northernmost part of Palestine and then head south into the area of the Decapolis cities. We do not know exactly which city he visited on this trip, but his visits and the associated impact on the Decapolis regions are well documented in scripture. While under Roman rule, these cities were populated with Jews and Gentiles as we've already studied; and Jesus made certain to spread the Gospel there as well.

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*Let's read through Mark 7 and consider the following questions.*

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1. What can we learn about ourselves from looking at what the Pharisees both did and said in Mark 7:1-5?
2. What did Jesus point out to the Pharisees and teachers of the law—the very people who should know the law inside out? (see Mark 7:6-13)

3. Jesus continues to point out the error of the Jewish leaders' ways. In Mark 7:8, he tells them that they had "let go of the commands of God and were holding on to human traditions." He then cites a specific example of how they conveniently set aside God's commands in order to observe their own traditions. What is the example that he gives them? Do we see anything like this today? What can we learn from this one example? (see Mark 7:9-13) (See also Exodus 20:12, 21:17, Deuteronomy 5:16, Leviticus 20:9, and 1 Timothy 5:4 and 5:8)
  
4. Now Jesus calls the crowd to him. I am assuming that the crowd had gathered as they heard Jesus talking to the religious leaders. Using the Pharisees' encounter, what did Jesus teach the crowd that ran counter to the traditions taught by their religious leaders? (see Mark 7:14-15)
  
5. As plain as Jesus' teaching was, even the disciples didn't understand it. Jesus had to explain it to them. What did Jesus teach them? Can you cite examples today that resemble the teachings of the Pharisees as contrasted by those of Jesus? (see Mark 7:16-23)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Jesus then leaves Capernaum and travels to Tyre, a seaport city in Lebanon about 10-15 miles north of today's Israel Lebanon border. Arriving in secret, the scripture tells us that he did not want anyone to know he was there. What is interesting about what happens next? How did this woman know Jesus was there, and why was she so determined to see him? (see Mark 7:24-26)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What did Jesus say to the Greek woman when she asked him for help, and what did he mean by it? (see Mark 7:27)

8. Following Jesus' sharp response, the woman would not be turned away, and responded back to Jesus. What did she say, and what happened because of that response? (see Mark 7:28-30)
9. We have seen Jesus drive out demons in earlier chapters in Mark. However, besides the fact that she was a Greek Gentile, what makes this miracle so different that Mark would include it here?
10. Jesus leaves Tyre and heads north a few miles along the Mediterranean coast to Sidon. From here he turns east and heads across and down the Sea of Galilee, once again into the region of the Decapolis—the ten Roman cities. Here, he performs another miracle; what was it? (see Mark 7:31-35)
11. Jesus tells them something that is hard for us to believe. He tells them not to tell anyone. Can you imagine? You have just witnessed the healing of a deaf and mute person, but you can't tell anyone. Consider the man himself; how could he literally not say anything? What actually happened? (see Mark 7:36-37)

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As we close this lesson, let me ask you if Jesus has ever done a miracle in your life, and you were so excited about it that you couldn't help tell others? That was clearly how the Greek woman, and the crowd with the deaf and mute man, all felt. They couldn't stop talking about it. Jesus only made one trip out of Palestine, and yet his teaching and miracles were well known there. Years later, a church would be established in Sidon; and at one point even Paul would visit it. Similarly, in the Decapolis, word spread quickly about Jesus. As we will see in our next lesson, Mark Chapter 8, the results of his early ministry continue to attract larger and larger crowds. In spite of the limitations on communications and travel, the Gospel was beginning to spread throughout Palestine and even to regions outside of Palestine. The same is true today—nothing can hinder God's great Gospel being proclaimed to anyone, anywhere.

Let's commit to being as excited as those we looked at in this lesson, as we share our Jesus experiences with others. Our light shines brighter than we might imagine in this very lost and dying world. Find ways this week to let yours shine, as Jesus continues building his church, searching for his lost sheep.

In Christ,

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