

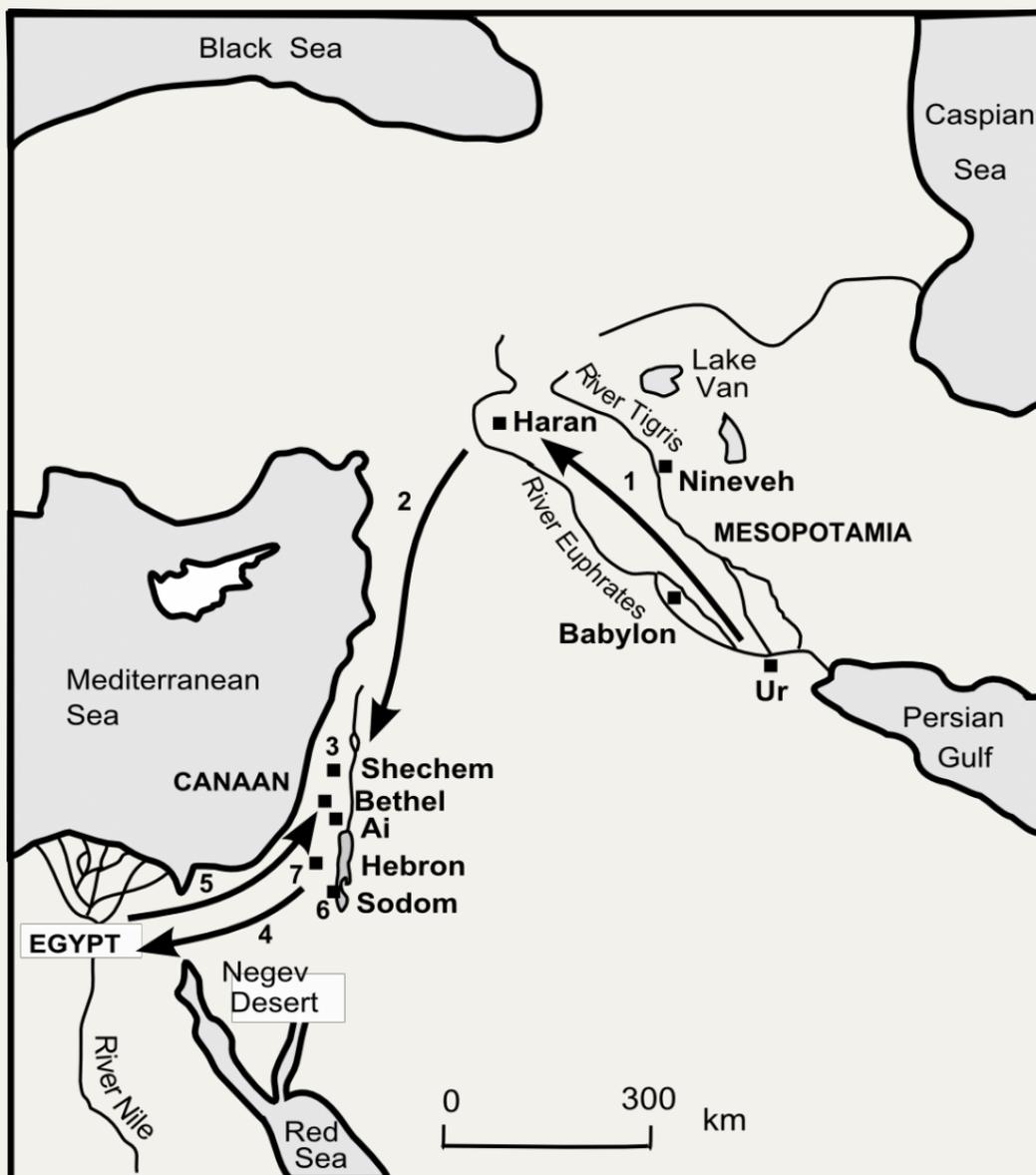
Lenten Series: Journeys of Faith

- Video Hymn: Will You come and Follow Me from UTube
- Bible study
 - Abraham
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stmatthews.com/sermons/Archive/MSeilerMar292009.pdf
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Abram's Journey to Canaan

Gen 11:10-26 The Book of Genesis lists many generations of Shem's descendents including Terah and Abram (later called Abraham). The story then recommences nearly a thousand years after the building of the **Tower of Babylonia** when Abram is born in the Amorite kingdom of **Mesopotamia**, in c.1900BC.

Gen 11:28 Terah and his family (including his sons Abram and Nahor, and his grandson Lot) live at **Ur** in **Mesopotamia** (see **Map 38**).



Map 38 Abram's Journey to Canaan

Ur

Ur developed during the reign of the Sumerian kings (c.3000 – 2300BC) and had been a major city for hundreds of years when Abram was born.



Traditional bee-hive shaped houses at Harran (Glumik)

Gen 12:1-3 God calls Terah's son Abram to "Leave your country... and go to the land I will show you." God establishes a covenant agreement with Abram to give his family the 'promised land' of **Canaan** (later called **Palestine**). This solemn agreement – which is renewed on many occasions – becomes the recurring theme of the Old Testament.

Gen 12:4-5 In c.1855BC, Abram and his nephew Lot set out for **Canaan**, about 400 miles / 640km away, with their tents and flocks (see **2** on **Map 38**).

Gen 12:6-7 Abram arrives in **Canaan** and builds an altar by the sacred tree of Moreh at **Shechem** (see 3 on **Map 38**).



Tel Balata (middle left), the site of Shechem, in modern-day Nablus (לרידע)

Shechem

The city is located on the only east-west pass through the **Central Highlands**, at the head of the **Wadi Farah** leading down to the **Jordan** crossing at **Adam (Damia Bridge)**.

Shechem was an important Canaanite religious centre. Abram built an altar here to commemorate his meeting with God (see Genesis 12:6) while, later, his grandson Jacob also built an altar here, and buried his wife Rachel's household gods under the sacred oak tree (see Genesis 35:1-4). **Shechem** continued to be an important religious centre after the conquest of **Canaan** under Joshua. At the end of the campaign, Joshua addressed all the people at **Shechem** and urged them to be faithful to the LORD their God (see Joshua 24:1). He renewed the covenant with God and set up a large sacred stone at **Shechem** to act as a witness (see Joshua 24:25-27).



Joseph's tomb at Shechem (Nablus) (לרידע)

Tomb of Joseph, covered by a small white-domed Ottoman building. Half a mile / 1 km south of **Joseph's Tomb** is the site of **Jacob's Well** (see John 4:6), now enclosed within a Greek Orthodox Monastery.

Gen 12:8-9 Abram moves to the hill country between **Bethel** and **Ai**. He prays to the LORD and builds an altar here, then moves south towards the **Negev Desert**.

Gen 12:10-20 Driven by drought and famine in the land of **Canaan** in c.1853BC, Abram and his wife Sarai journey to the well-watered lands of the **Nile Delta** in **Egypt** (see 4 on **Map 38**). Sarai claims to be Abram's sister rather than his wife and is accepted into the harem of the Egyptian Pharaoh - probably Pharaoh Khety IV. Abram receives sheep, cattle and servants in return. But the deception is uncovered and Abram and Sarai are forced to flee.

Gen 13:1-9 Abram and Sarai return from **Egypt** to the hill country near **Bethel** (see 5 on **Map 38**)

Source: <http://www.thebiblejourney.org/>

Questions

Why do you think Abraham answered God's call, especially given the culture of multiple gods?

(Nanna god of the moon, Enlil god of wisdom, protector of arts, crafts, science, literature, and magic which was one thing that highly interested the people of that day. God of sun and magic Marduk, Asherah goddess of sex and war, Shumuqan god of cattle, and Baal god of crops and storms.)

But, why did they move to Haran in the first place, apart from God speaking to Abraham? Since moving to new lands at that period in time was seen as extreme, there had to be a purpose to it for Terah to ask such a thing of his family. At the time we find Abraham living in Ur, we see a couple things happen. The Elamites had invaded, we see major crop failures particularly on the barley yields, and political unrest as well as economic strain was prevalent. So, this clearly could have been a strong motivator to find fresh pastures, and for Terah to pack up his belongings, take his family out of Ur.

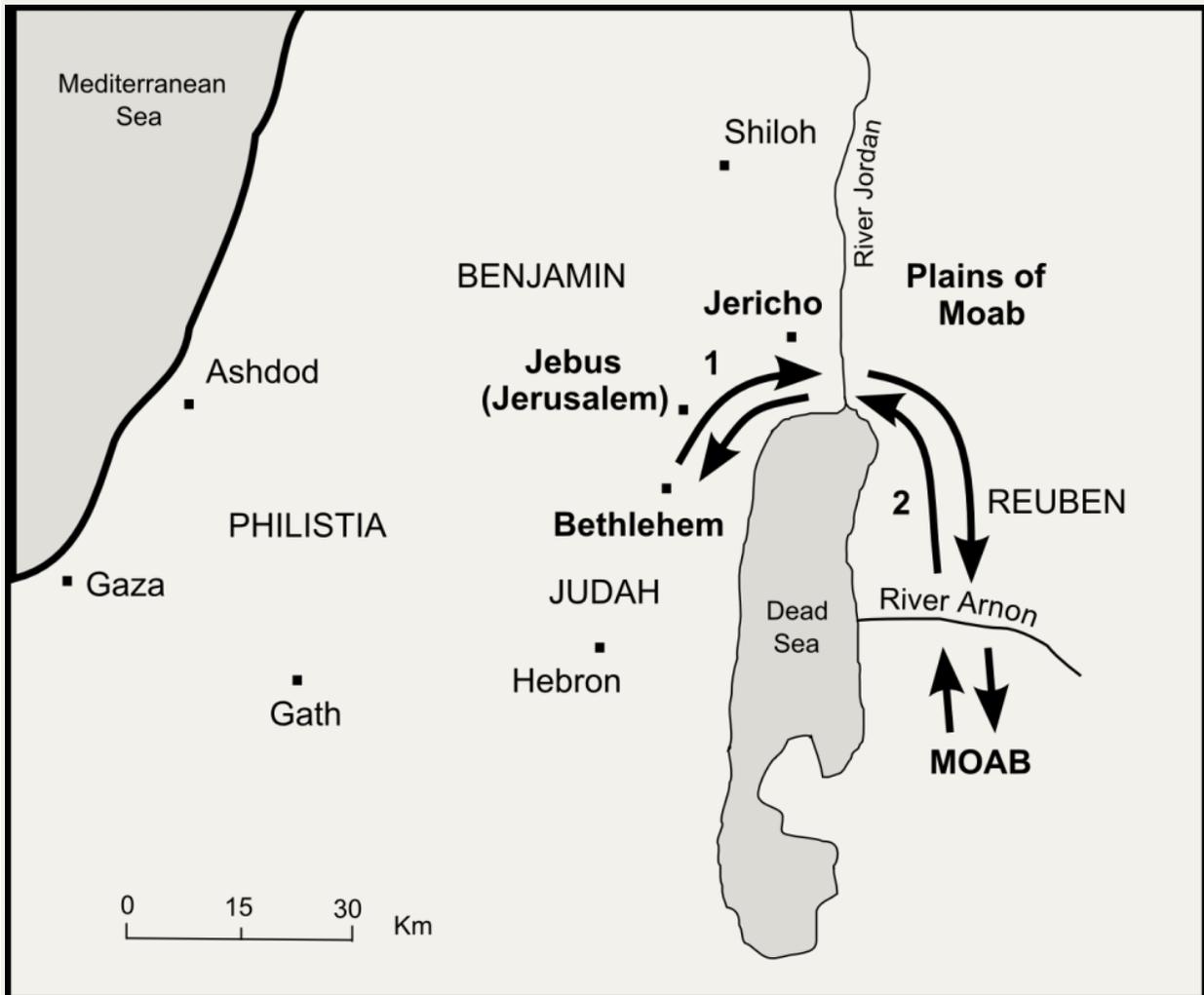
Abraham simply acted in a culturally acceptable way by following his father and bidding his time. We clearly see that by the time Terah did die, Abraham would assume the role as patriarch. Then we see everyone following Abraham, just as he had obediently demonstrated his place as a son to Terah in Ur.

Abraham was a real life account. His step of faith was very significant and went completely against the norms of his age and the world at that time. To believe in one God would have been seen as foolish, strange, and weird, but God called Abraham and he obeyed. We do not see him arguing about journeying to Canaan, or lamenting and wanting to return to Ur, we see him as a hero of the faith, and a man whose heart and mind was opened to the incredible character and nature of the God who had created him, and this would forever change history.

Source: <https://peterifast.com/2012/05/14/abraham-from-ur-to-haran>

Ruth's journey to Bethlehem

Ruth 1:1-5 Towards the end of the period of the 'Judges', during seventy years of Philistine rule in c.1060BC, there is a severe famine in **Canaan**. Two Israelites, Elimelech and his wife Naomi, travel east from **Bethlehem** in **Judah**, cross the **River Jordan** and settle in the land of **Moab** (see **1** on **Map 52**). Some time later, Elimelech dies, and their two sons marry Moabite women. About ten years later, both the sons also die.



Map 52 Ruth's journey to Bethlehem

Ruth 1:6-18 Naomi decides to return alone to **Bethlehem** from **Moab** in c.1050BC, but one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth (a Moabite), is determined to go with her and care for her (see **2** on **Map 52**).

(Ruth 1:16-17):

*Wherever you go I will go,
wherever you lodge I will lodge.
Your people shall be my people
and your God, my God.
Where you die I will die,
and there be buried.*

Ruth 1:19-22 The two women arrive in **Bethlehem** (meaning 'house of bread') at the start of the barley harvest in April. Barley was used to make bread.

Ruth 2:1-23 Ruth goes to pick up leftover grain in a field belonging to a relative of Naomi (see Leviticus 19:9-10). She gains the favour of Boaz, the landowner, who has heard about her kindness to Naomi.

Ruth 3:1-18 Ruth seeks out Boaz under cover of darkness. Boaz is fast asleep after winnowing barley on the threshing floor. He awakes to find Ruth at his feet. As a relative, Boaz agrees to help Ruth and Naomi by buying a plot of land which belonged to Naomi's husband Elimelech (see Leviticus 25:25).

Ruth 4:1-12 To fulfil the laws of inheritance, another kinsman – who is more closely related to Ruth than Boaz – is given the option of buying the land, but he cannot afford it. So Boaz buys the land from Naomi and then marries Ruth in order to keep the ownership of the land within Elimelech's family.

Ruth 4:13-22 Ruth and Boaz have a son, Obed. He becomes the father of Jesse, the father of King David. In due course, **Bethlehem** becomes the 'City of David'.

Source: <http://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/29-the-journeys-of-ruth-and-samuel/ruths-journey-to-bethlehem/>

Questions

1. How is this relationship between Ruth and Naomi grounded in the culture of the day?

In the culture of the ancient Mediterranean region, women were particularly vulnerable, especially without a male relative to serve as a patron. Israel's law included specific but limited protection for widows (Exodus 22:21-22 and Deuteronomy 24:17) probably because they were often neglected. In fact, the writings of the prophets (Isaiah 1:23; 10:2 and Malachi 3:5), indicate that the abuse of widows is a reason for God's displeasure and judgment against Israel.

Necessity demanded that the two women find a way to survive, and Jewish law provided a meager way to eke out an existence. Gleaning was the prescribed practice of allowing those on the fringes of society to comb the fields after the first harvest before the fields were stripped completely bare. Ruth, the younger of the two women, took full advantage of this practice in the fields of Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi.

Naomi knew the customs of her people and she used them to help Ruth find a creative way to change the relationship of master and servant to husband and wife. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth not only provided security and protection for both women, but it produced an heir. Ruth's son, Obed, would become King David's grandfather and Ruth would be forever remembered in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5)

Source:: <http://www.dolr.org/article/ruth-naomis-bond-reflects-gods-love>

- 2. When have family relationships both tested and cemented your mutual bonds?**
- 3. What is significant about the last reading?**

Peter's Journey

Peter & John heal a crippled man

Acts 2:42-46 The believers continue to meet every day in **Solomon's Porch** in the **Temple courtyards**. They share their meals and their possessions, and devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and to prayer. They 'break bread' in their homes (an ordinary, informal meal that has become the more formal 'Eucharist' or 'Holy Communion' service), and gather regularly in the **Temple**. Everyone is filled with awe when they see the many miracles and wonders done by the apostles.

Acts 3:1-26 Peter and John heal a crippled man at the **Beautiful Gate** in the **Temple** courts. They explain that the man has been healed through faith in Jesus whom God raised from the dead. People are amazed, and the number of believers rises to about five thousand (see Acts 4:4).



The Jewish Temple, showing the Beautiful Gate (lower centre) (Acts 3:2)

Acts 4:1-22 Peter and John are arrested by the temple guards at the insistence of the Sadducees (who oppose belief in any form of resurrection after death). They are imprisoned overnight, probably at the home of Caiaphas, and brought before the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin) the following

day.

Annas and Caiaphas – the chief priests who had ordered Jesus’s death – question them. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, explains that the lame man was healed ‘in the name’ (meaning ‘by the power’) of Jesus of Nazareth. “You crucified him, but God raised him from the dead” (Acts 4:10). The Sanhedrin can’t decide what to do with Peter and John as they can’t deny the miracle that everyone has seen. So they release them after further threats.

Acts 4:23-31 Peter and John report back to the believers. They pray for miraculous signs and wonders and praise God. Suddenly, an earthquake shakes the building where they are meeting in **Jerusalem**. They’re all filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit and continue to spread the Good News boldly.

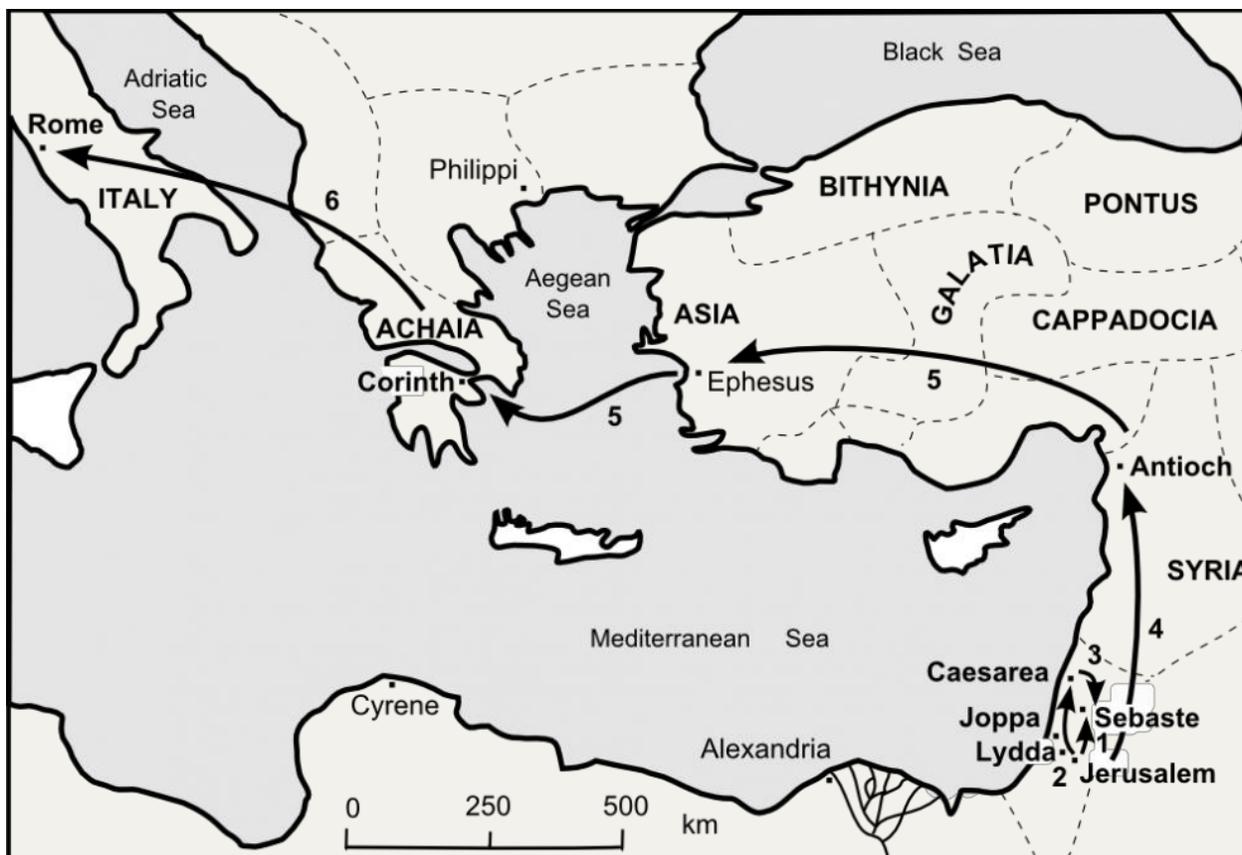
Acts 5:17-42 Peter and another apostle are jailed by the High Priest, but an angel sets them free during the night. The apostles return to the **Temple** courts at daybreak and continue to preach. They are ordered to appear before the Jewish council again. Peter states boldly that the Sanhedrin ordered the crucifixion of Jesus, but God raised him from death to his own right hand as the saviour of the Jewish people.

Peter's Journeys

Acts 5:1-16 As the leader of the church in **Jerusalem** over the next few years, Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira when they lie about the money they have received from selling some land.

Acts 5:17-42 Peter is the spokesperson when he and another apostle are arrested in **Jerusalem**.

Acts 8:14-24 Peter and John go to **Sebaste** in **Samaria** in 35AD and pray for the new Samaritan believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit (see **1** on **Map 19**).



Map 19 Peter's Journeys

Acts 8:25 They return to **Jerusalem**, sharing their message en route in many villages in **Samaria**.

Acts 9:32-35 Later in the year, Peter visits the believers in **Lydda** (see 2 on **Map 19**). He heals Aeneas who has been bedridden for eight years. **Lod**, today, is the site of **Tel Aviv's** international airport.

Acts 9:36-43 Peter is called to the port of **Joppa** where Tabitha, one of the believers, has died. Peter prays for her, and the dead woman comes back to life.

Peter stayed in **Joppa** at the home of Simon the Tanner – the reputed site of which can still be visited today. **St Peter's Church** commemorates Peter's visit,

Acts 10:1-8 Cornelius – a Gentile God-fearing centurion belonging to the Italian Cohort (an auxiliary unit of archers) based at the Roman administrative centre in **Caesarea** – has a vision of an angel who tells him to send for Peter in **Joppa**.

Acts 10:9-23 Peter – praying on the flat roof of Simon the Tanner’s house in **Joppa** – also has a vision in which he is told not to call anything ‘unclean’ that God has made ‘clean’ (see Leviticus 11:46-47).

Shortly after this, Cornelius’s two Gentile servants and his attendant arrive at **Joppa**. Peter invites them into the house to be his guests although Jews would not normally eat with Gentiles because they were regarded as ritually ‘unclean’ (see Deuteronomy 14:1-3) and eating with them would make a Jew ‘unclean’.

Peter in Caesarea and Jerusalem

Acts 10:23-48 Peter travels to **Caesarea** towards the end of 35AD and shares the Good News of Jesus’s death and resurrection with Cornelius’s Gentile family and friends (see **2** on **Map 19**). The Holy Spirit falls on all present and the six Jewish believers from **Joppa** (see Acts 11:12) are amazed that God has poured out his Spirit on the Gentiles – as they “heard them speaking in different languages and praising God” (Acts 10:46). The new Gentile believers are baptised as “They have received the Holy Spirit just as we did!” (Acts 10:47). Peter stays in the Gentiles’ house at **Caesarea** for several days.

Acts 11:1-18 Peter reports back to the Jewish believers in **Jerusalem** (see **3** on **Map 19**). The more conservative *Hebraic* Jewish believers criticize Peter for eating with uncircumcised Gentiles, but most of the disciples agree to accept the new Gentile converts into the fellowship of believers.

Peter hands over the leadership to James

Acts 12:1-19 The narrative now skips a few years to 44AD. Peter (who is regarded as a radical Jew for mixing with Gentiles) is arrested in **Jerusalem** during the Passover festival on the orders of King Herod Agrippa I, who has recently beheaded the apostle James, the brother of John.

Peter is miraculously freed from prison during the night by an angel. He rejoins the believers – who are meeting at the home of John Mark in **Jerusalem**. He hands over the leadership of the **Jerusalem** church to the more traditional James (the brother of Jesus – see Galatians 1:19) and flees elsewhere for safety.

Acts 15:1-21 Peter addresses the assembly of believers in **Jerusalem** in 49/50AD. James – as leader of the church – concludes that the Jewish believers shouldn't insist that Gentiles who have become believers in Jesus must adopt all the Jewish religious traditions (see Acts 15:12-21).

Gal. 2:11-14 Peter meets Paul in **Antioch** in 50AD, shortly after the Council of **Jerusalem** (see 4 on Map 19). Paul accuses Peter of changing his mind and drawing back from eating with Gentiles – under pressure from the more traditional *Hebraic* Jewish believers from **Jerusalem**.

1 Cor. 1:12 When Paul writes to the Corinthian believers in 56AD, some believers in **Corinth** claim to follow Peter, while others claim to follow Paul or Apollos. Peter may, therefore, have escaped to **Corinth** between 44 and 49AD (see 5 on Map 19).

1 Pet. 1:1 In 66AD, Peter writes from **Rome** to the Jewish believers in the Roman provinces of **Asia Minor** – in **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia** and **Bithynia** (see 6 on Map 19).

2 Pet. 1:14-15 In 67AD, Peter writes again from **Rome**, where he has been imprisoned and is about to be executed.

Questions

1. What aspects of Peter's relationship with Christ prepared him for his role as a disciple?

Peter is one of the 'inner circle' with James and John. They are singled out to spend extra time with Jesus and are given the privilege of seeing the raising of the Synagogue Ruler's daughter from the dead, witnessing the Transfiguration, and keeping watch with Jesus in Gethsemane.

Peter's Confession

-A crucial moment in the relationship between Jesus and Peter is Peter's confession.

Matthew 16:13-

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, [a]Elijah; but still others, [b]Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He *said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are [c]the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus reaffirms Peter as the rock because he understands who Jesus is; it is the quality of his relationship with Jesus, based on the knowledge revealed to him, that makes him suitable for this role.

Walking On Water

Peter's strength of character was also an asset and on another occasion we see Jesus seeking to channel it towards a deeper faith. The disciples have encountered a storm and have been battling the weather for many hours. When Jesus approaches them it is between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. They must have been physically exhausted, not only from their ministry, but also from their fight with the storm. They possibly feel abandoned by Jesus. However, their principal emotion when they see what they believe to be a ghost approaching is fear. In Peter this emotion is quickly reversed when he sees that it is Jesus. His instinct is to get to where Jesus is. Whilst we might consider that his behaviour is just another example of typically impulsive Peter, and the

request to walk with Jesus on such rough and stormy water an ill-considered gesture, Jesus does not condemn but seeks to encourage his faith.

Peter's question 'Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water' assumes that it is Jesus and should be read as a statement of faith, rather than an identity check. Jesus' response of 'Come' is entirely consistent with his initial call for Peter to follow him. Peter, inconsistent with this calling at other moments, wants to obey now in this unusual situation. This 'getting-out-of-the-boat' faith that he displays is precisely the kind he will need later on and Jesus' response to Peter's subsequent failure is not to condemn his initial faith, but the inconsistency and double-mindedness that he displays in sustaining it. Jesus wants more of this kind of faith from Peter.

Peter's Denial And Restoration

Whilst all of Jesus' interactions with Peter can be understood as being loving and motivated by Peter's best interests, a few insights noted by the gospel writers show us the depth of his concern. Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial is one example of this. At the time it was given, it clearly dispirited and concerned Peter and the other disciples. In retrospect, however, Peter would have been reassured that although Jesus knew in advance of his betrayal, it did not disqualify him from a relationship with Jesus, or a position as his disciple.

Luke's account gives us particular insight. Jesus begins his prediction with the words 'Simon, Simon'. The repetition demonstrates a sense of grief, of kindness and of love; Luke uses it to highlight moments of particular emotion that Jesus experiences. Here, Jesus is particularly moved by the trial that he knows Peter will undergo and his use of Simon, rather than Peter, underlines this. All of Simon's progress towards becoming Peter will be knocked back in this one incident.

Although Satan has asked to sift all the disciples (the Greek 'you' is plural), Jesus has prayed for Simon especially that his faith will not fail. Jesus is concerned to guard his relationship with Peter, which, at the moment of his testing and in the future, will be based upon faith. We have already noted Luke's theme of demonstrating the nature and effectiveness of Jesus' prayer life as a major source of blessing to his disciples. Luke is clear: Peter will survive the ordeal because Jesus has prayed for him. It displays one of the ways in which his relationship with Peter and his relationship with the Father

interact. Jesus has particular concern for Peter in his trial as he will be the only disciple to betray Jesus in such a public fashion. He is also concerned that Peter will come through his ordeal and become the rock he should be. Jesus expects Peter to eventually strengthen the other disciples.

Jesus' concern and love for Peter is also shown in his post-resurrection conversation in John 21. He takes the time aside (although possibly not out of earshot of the other disciples) to reinstate Peter and demonstrate his forgiveness. Although Peter is hurt by Jesus' third repetition of his question 'Do you love me?', Jesus is gently forcing a threefold declaration of his love that mirrors his threefold denial.

Furthermore, the repetition requires Peter to declare 'Lord you know all things...' and throw himself in reliance back on Jesus. Rather than the previous episodes where Peter has demonstrated a penchant for extravagant claims of loyalty, here he keeps the declaration simple and appeals to Jesus to weigh his words. There has been progress in Peter's relationship with Jesus as Peter responds in a more appropriate manner than he has on previous occasions.

Source: <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/jesus-life-changing-relationship-simon-peter>

2. What are the implications for our relationship with Christ that we can learn from Peter?

Christ's Journey to the Cross

Questions and Readings

1. What actions of Christ might be seen as “turning points” in his ministry that would set him in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders?

Matthew 5:17-20

Matthew 12:9-14

Matthew 15:18-20

Matthew 21:23-27

John 5-v 16- 23

2. What words of Christ might upset the Jewish religious leaders?

Mark 2:3 -12

[Daniel 7:13,14](#)

3. Discuss the actions of others in testifying about Christ that would concern the religious leaders of the day.

Mathew 16: 15-16

Mathew 3: 11

Luke 2 :22 - 38

4. At what times did Christ show intentional obedience to God's plan?

John 12:44-49

Matthew 21:1-5

Notes:

1. ACTIONS

Jesus declared that the legalistic righteousness of the Pharisees was pitted against the genuine law of God He had come to uphold.

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven** ([Matthew 5:17-20 NIV](#)).*

Jesus called into question the meaning of the primary Jewish symbols—Sabbath, food taboos, ethnic identity, ancestral lands, and ultimately the Temple itself.²

Disagreements about the Sabbath [holy day]

The *Pharisees were very strict about [the Sabbath](#). [The Sabbath was the 7th day of the week, which was the holy day for the Jews.] The *Pharisees were very angry when Jesus cured anyone on the Sabbath. (See. Matthew 12:9-14, especially verse 14). But they did not realise clearly that the law tells us to love other people.

Disagreements about traditions

There was another matter for disagreement. The *Pharisees said that everybody should wash their hands before food. This was their tradition. Today, it might seem unimportant. But the *Pharisees thought that small things like this were very important. Jesus answered this by these words:

Matthew 15:18-20 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart. These are the things that make someone ‘unclean’. [By unclean Jesus meant evil,

or bad.] All these things begin in a person's heart: [We might use the word 'mind' instead of 'heart' today]

Disagreements about Jesus' importance

There was a very important disagreement on [Palm Sunday](#). [That was when Jesus rode in to Jerusalem, like a king, but in peace. People waved the branches of trees (called palm trees) as a welcome.] The crowd sang, '*Hosanna to the *Son of David' (Mat 21:15-17). *Prophets had said that the *Messiah would have a welcome like this. But the *Pharisees were very angry.

Everything that happened in the last week, made matters worse. At last, the *Pharisees asked Jesus what his authority was. What was his authority for what he taught? What was his authority for what he did? For example, he had forced the [evil traders to leave the *temple](#) (Matthew 21:23-27). They hoped that Jesus would make mistakes in his answers. He never did. Jesus showed that he was wiser than they were. After this, they asked no more questions. They decided that they had to kill Jesus. That was the only way to keep their own power over the people. They thought that their power mattered more than Jesus' life.

By this time, Jesus had only very strong words to say to these people. He warned them that there would be a [time of *judgement](#) to come. See Matthew 23.

2. WORDS

John 6: 35, 48 I am the bread of life

John 8: 12, 9:5 I am the light of the world

John 8: 58 Before Abraham was, I am

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd

John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life

Mark 2:3 -12

³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

In the Old Testament a priest in the sanctuary could communicate God's forgiveness when the atoning sacrifice was made. But Leviticus simply says that when the worshiper confessed the sin and made the sacrifice, the sin was

forgiven (4:26). It was God who forgave (see also [Psalm 32](#)); the priest could only communicate that good word to the genuine penitent after he saw the contrition, the sacrifice, or the restoration to health. At other times a prophet would come and announce to the sinner that God had put away the sin (see [2 Sam. 12:13](#)). But here Jesus, seeing their faith, announces that the man's sins are forgiven--before he was healed, before he offered a sacrifice in the Temple, and before he even said anything, if we can assume that in the account he did not say anything else. The basis for the forgiveness from the paralytic's side was faith. It was his faith that saved him; it was his faith that made him whole. He believed in Jesus and wanted to be set before Him. And yet the text says that Jesus saw "their faith"; it is possible for people to show faith as they help another man's faith, for that is what has happened here.

But we cannot miss the dramatic significance of this. At that precise moment Jesus chose to do something that everyone in the room knew only God could do--declare the forgiveness of sin.

Son of Man

Interestingly, Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" to refer to Himself. Rather than deal with this later we may simply say at this point that this is a Messianic title that Jesus used for Himself (check this title out in the biblical theology books, for there is a lot of material on it). The title comes from [Daniel 7:13,14](#). In that passage Daniel saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days, God the Father in the vision, and was given absolute authority over all creation, so that all people would worship Him. Now these details are significant in this description. He is clearly deity if the whole world is going to worship Him. And as deity He can do the works of deity, including forgive sins. But according to the vision of Daniel He is coming in the clouds, which in the Bible is evidence of divine judgment. If He is coming with judgment to establish the kingdom of righteousness, He has the authority as Judge of the whole world to pardon or to condemn. So on both counts the prophecy of the Son of Man shows that Messiah has the authority to forgive sins.

The point is that if Jesus can take care of the effects of sin--by healing a paralytic or a leper, or by raising a dead person--He can therefore also take care of the cause of the illness--by forgiving the sin. For Jesus the forgiving of sins and the healing of diseases are two sides of His mission, with the forgiveness of sins being the most important.

John 5-v 16- 23 The Authority of the Son

¹⁶So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."¹⁸For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

¹⁹Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. ²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

3. Discuss the actions of others in testifying about Christ that would concern the religious leaders of the day.

Mathew 16: 15-16 Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Mathew 3: 11 John the Baptist testifies to Jesus

¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 2 v22 - 38: Jesus Presented in the Temple- Simeon and Anna

²²When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"^[b]), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."^[c]

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for

him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^[d] your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.^[e] She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

4. At what times did Christ show intentional obedience to God's plan?

Jesus honors the authority of His Father through complete obedience. A very clear but seldom pondered truth of the New Testament is that Christ's entire life and ministry were orchestrated by His Father and that Jesus was careful to carry out every detail according to the will of His Father. "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come . . . to do thy will, O God'" ([Hebrews 10:7](#)).

Even His coming to earth was an act of obedience to His Father. His life and ministry focused on the will of the Father. "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" ([John 14:31](#)).

All that Jesus did and said was exactly what His Father wanted Him to do and say. "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak" ([John 12:44-49](#)).

All that Christ did in His life on earth was done according to the Scriptures. What God had spoken in the Old Testament was so authoritative Christ obeyed it completely. "Now this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled" ([Matthew 21:1-5](#)).

Ten or so times in the book of Matthew we see that Jesus lived exactly as the Scriptures predicted in order that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

Christ's Obedience Brings Benefits to Believers

It is strange to think of Christ, the perfect Son of God, having to learn anything. Yet the Bible clearly tells us that He learned obedience. "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" ([Hebrews 5:8](#)). We know He did not learn obedience because He was disobedient. Then why did this happen?

He learned obedience experientially so we would have an "older brother" (Jesus is called the "firstborn among many brethren"), a high priest who can fully be sympathetic and empathetic with our situation. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" ([Hebrews 4:15](#)).

Source answersingenesis.org/jesus-christ/christs-obedience-to-the-authority-of-god

“Three Journeys”

stmatthews.com/sermons/Archive/MSeilerMar292009.pdf

One of the great metaphors of the Bible is “the journey.” The Bible is filled with journey upon journey. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture is full of people on the move.

In the beginning of the Old Testament, Abraham journeys from Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land. Many generations later, Abraham’s descendants journey from slavery and oppression in Egypt into the land of Israel. Many generations after that, they journey back to their Promised Land after the tragic downfall of their civilization and their forced exile in Babylon.

In the New Testament, Jesus himself journeys through Palestine, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God. As he journeys, he shows people what that Kingdom looks like by his deeds of love and power.

After the Resurrection, Paul and the apostles journey all over the Roman Empire, and their message reaches to the ends of the earth – and here we are, millennia later, with our journeys touching theirs.

It makes sense that the concept of “the journey” would be so central to Scripture, because we human beings are journeying people. We make sense of our lives by understanding them as journeys, as the unfolding story of who we are and what we do in the world. We think and talk and worry about our career arcs, or our family histories, or our financial forecasts, or our estate plans. In our better moments we think and talk and pray about our spiritual journeys – all ways of thinking about our lives, our stories, about the journey that has been, and the journey that will be. In some deep way, journeying is an elemental part of who we are as human beings.

This image, this metaphor of the journey has been very helpful to me as I’ve tried to understand the deeper meaning of the reading from the twelfth chapter of John’s Gospel. John tells us in this passage about the moment when several different journeys intersect, and he tells us something about what it means that those journeys come together.

The first journeyer in John's Gospel is, of course, Jesus himself. From its very first words, John's Gospel makes it clear that Jesus is on a journey – a journey that is far more than just a walking tour of Palestine. The pre-eternal Word of God, who is with God and who is God, has journeyed into this world, has chosen to be with us, to become flesh, to reveal his divine being and nature and love to us by becoming a human person in the man Jesus of Nazareth. For John's Gospel, this is the first and greatest journey – the cosmic journey of Christ from the Father into this world, through suffering and death and then back to the glory of the Father. Every other journey in John's Gospel, all of the lives and experiences of all the other people in John's Gospel, only make sense in the light of that great journey of Christ. John's Gospel wants to tell us that apart from the great journey of Christ, our lives don't really get anywhere. Apart from the grace and power and love of Christ, our lives are just a kind of going in circles. But, John wants to tell us, in the light of the great journey of Christ, our lives can be a journey into God.

There are other journeyers in this Gospel. John doesn't tell us their names – all we know about them is that they are "some Greeks." They are the only Greeks – the only non-Jews, that is – in John's Gospel who encounter Jesus during his ministry. They have somehow heard of Jesus, they have learned something about him, and what they've learned has given them a desire to be with him. They have journeyed to be with Jesus, perhaps over a very long distance. That distance may be geographical, or spiritual, or both. They seek out the follower of Jesus who has the most Greek-sounding name – Philip – and they ask Philip to arrange a meeting with Jesus. And in this moment, their lives, their journeys, and the cosmic journey of Christ from God and to God, suddenly and dramatically intersect.

And that, Jesus says, is precisely the point. The journey of Jesus, the journey of destiny and salvation and healing that he is traveling, now starts to touch not just Jews but non-Jews. The Greeks have arrived. "The hour," Jesus' decisive

moment of glory and revelation that will climax in the Cross, has come. This is the moment, in John's Gospel, when the full meaning and power of Jesus' journey begins to be revealed. This is the moment when the saving journey of Christ begins to be revealed as the work of God that will heal and save and transform not just the covenant people of Israel, but the whole human race.

"The hour has come," Jesus says, "and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself."

Christ, now that he is lifted up from the earth by his crucifixion and his resurrection, has become the pole star, the magnetic north, for every journey, for every person, for the meaning and destiny of every individual.

But there is one last detail about this Gospel passage that has puzzled me for years. What happened to the Greeks? Do they get to see Jesus? Doesn't Jesus ever talk to them? Do they ever get what they came for? John's Gospel doesn't say. It just leaves them – and us – hanging. And for years, that loose end in the story drove me crazy.

But now I think I am starting to understand. I think the Greeks did see Jesus. I think John's Gospel is suggesting to us that the Greeks did see everything they needed to see of Jesus – because they had come to Jerusalem, and they were going to see his suffering and his death and perhaps even be eyewitnesses of his Resurrection. It's as if they came seeking an interview, but what they got was to SEE the cataclysmic, earthshaking events that were going to unfold in Jerusalem over the next few days. If they showed up, they would see. If they saw, and let the cosmic journey of Christ fully intersect theirs – if they saw, and understood what they were seeing, and if they believed – they would find what they were seeking. They just needed to show up for the next few days. They needed to show up – for Holy Week. They had to be brave enough to take it all in, and to believe what they heard and saw. Amen.

The Scriptures are full of accounts of journeys.

Here are the starting points and the destinations of several notable journeys. Who made them?

1. Caesarea to Rome
2. Samaria to the Gaza road
3. Bethlehem to Egypt
4. Jerusalem to Mahanaim
5. Plains of Moab to Mount Nebo
6. Haran to Shechem
7. Kiriath Jearim to the House of Obed-Edom
8. Beersheba to Mount Horeb
9. Moab to Bethlehem
10. Cenchrea (Corinth) to Rome

Quiz Answers

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| 1. | Acts 27 | Paul and his companions |
| 2. | Acts 8.5,26 | Philip |
| 3. | Matthew 2.13-15 | Joseph, Mary and Jesus |
| 4. | 2Samuel 15.14, 17.27 | King David and his loyal friends |
| 5. | Deuteronomy 34.1 | Moses |
| 6. | Genesis 12.1-6 | Abraham and his company |
| 7. | 1 Chronicles 13.6-13 | The Ark of God with King David |
| 8. | 1 Kings 19.3-8 | Elijah |
| 9. | Ruth 1.6,19 | Naomi and Ruth |
| 10. | Romans 16.1-2 | Phoebe |