



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice #2305 Sun 19 Mar Mount of Beatitudes, Chorazin's Synagogue

Our first stop after coming from the Boat Museum was The Mount of Beatitudes. I think I already mentioned how thick tour buses were in Israel. This



Sunday morning Costia nuzzled ours in amongst ten others in the over burdened parking lot. We assembled in an alcove in front of a Roman Catholic Church. It was

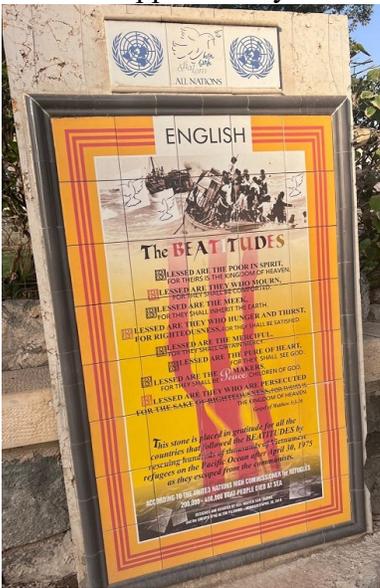


built to commemorate where Jesus preached his longest sermon. Eli explained some details about the location and the Roman Church, Pastor Lee explained some things about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount delivered here on this mount. A few feet away, in another near by alcove, there gathered a group of loud and laughing women in head dress. I supposed they could have been a group of charismatics or Coptic Christians,



Photo by Cara Gates

excited about being where Jesus had preached, but shortly the laughter, just as loud, turned more to a flavor of jeering or mocking. I am not exactly sure why a group of Muslims would visit the Mount of Beatitudes. I supposed then they were there for malicious purposes. We out stayed their "laughter" and



they dissolved away into the crowds after several glaring stares in our direction.

Our view of where Jesus likely stood was obscured by the Roman Catholic Church of the Beatitudes. As much as the 1938 Neo-Byzantine architecture, design by Antonio Barluzzi, blocked our view of the sea, the



Mount of Beatitudes
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Roman religion, designed by Roman Emperor Constantine (272–337AD) blocks the view of Christ's salvation by grace through faith.

I praise the Lord that in 1958 a Baptist preacher of the gospel, Cecil Palm, going door to door, knocked on the door of 40 Platte Street, and Levi and Doris Rice were marvelously converted from Roman Catholicism, to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt.18:3). I was born-again-saved two years later.

It would have been worth the time, sitting on the Mount of Beatitudes, to read all three chapters of Christ's sermon on the mount, but, alas, our schedule dictated what could and couldn't be covered here. Matthew, the opening book of the Bible's New Testament is, appropriately, the introduction to the new covenant, which steps us out of the dispensation of law, and into the dispensation of grace. In it the kingdom of heaven is offered to the Jews, who reject and crucify their Messiah, the son of God, who becomes the Passover Lamb of God, and the Saviour of men. Born in Matthew 1, worshiped in 2, baptized in 3, and tested in 4, his sermon on the mount in chapters 5-7 are the full details of the kingdom of heaven. His 9-Blessed “R”s of the introduction of the sermon, divide into three groups of three. Three cover “getting in”, three cover “changes made to a soul”, and three cover “the world's treatment of those in the kingdom”.



Who gets in? The poor in spirit, who mourn over sin, and are meek (Mt.5:3, 4, 5).

Ps 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Isa 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Isa 61:2-3 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the

spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.



*Ps 22:26 **The meek** shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.*

*Ps 25:9 **The meek** will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

*Ps 37:11 But **the meek** shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

*Ps 76:9 When God arose to judgment, to save all **the meek of the earth**. Selah.*

*Ps 147:6 The LORD lifteth up **the meek**:*

he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

*Ps 149:4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify **the meek** with salvation.*

What do they get? The kingdom of God, a comforter, and the earth as an inheritance (Mt.5:3, 4, 5).

*Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever;*

*Joh 14:26 But **the Comforter**, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,*



whatsoever I have said unto you.

*Joh 15:26 But when **the Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

Once a soul is in the Kingdom of God, how do they change? They hunger and thirst after righteousness, are merciful, and are pure in heart, praise the Lord (Mt.5:6, 7, 8).

Our old nature did not hunger and thirst after righteousness. *Rom 3:11-12 "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* Our old nature was not merciful, nor pure in heart; the new nature that God enlivens and plants in a born-again-saved soul, is merciful, and is pure in heart.



So, What do they get? They get filled, they get mercy, and they get to see God (Mt.5:6, 7, 8)!

Once “in”, what are they to the world? They are peacemakers, they are persecuted, and they are reviled.

And what do they get for all that? They get called “the children of God”, for theirs “is the kingdom of heaven”, and they can “rejoice and be exceeding glad” (5:9,10, 11).

That is a quick, deep dive into the 9-Blessed “R”s; three Rs get us in, three Rs change us up, and three Rs make us say, “This world is not my home.”

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom.11:33).

The sermon on the mount goes on for three chapters but, alas, our visit to the hill where Jesus taught it, had more time restrictions than he did. After a brief examination of the Beatitudes by Pastor Lee, we were given a little time to explore the beautifully maintained park surrounding the Roman Catholic Church, or to venture in for photos, before we were to meander back to the bus.



Several of us circumvented the catholic church and wandered down toward the sea. We imagined what all this would have looked like without the Roman Church, and all the nicely paved walkways. People are often amazed at how a lake backdrop acts as a very effective speech sounding board. Bev and I had the good fortune to live on lake shores of Oneida Lake for six years, and Waneta Lake for twenty-seven years, and knew how a voice easily carried for a half mile. Jesus preaching to 10,000 people at a time was quite conceivable. From our upper

porch deck overlooking Waneta Lake we can listen in on boat conversations half way across the lake. Unfortunately their boom boxes are even louder than that.

Our head count was completed on the bus and we headed out for our next stop at an excavated synagogue at Chorazin.



*Woe unto thee, **Chorazin!** woe unto thee, **Bethsaida!** for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. ²³ And thou, **Capernaum**, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it*

would have remained until this day (Mt.11:21-23, cf Lu.10:13-16).

Our guide Eli pointed out that Chorazin ([32°54'48"N, 35°33'47"E](#)), and Bethsaida ([32°54'36"N, 35°37'51.6"E](#)), combined with Capernaum ([32°52'51.6000"N, 035°34'30.8280"E](#)) to outline an area that might be called the “Evangelical Triangle;” a triangle on the northwestern end of the Sea of Galilee where most (about 80%) of Jesus' public ministry unfolded. The three villages were Bible “*Woe unto thee*” cities in Matthew 11 and Luke 10, and sure enough these three cities were all abandoned and forgotten for many centuries. From the farming town of Chorazin (Grk <5523> Χοραζίν (khor-ad-zin’), meaning “a furnace of smoke”) you could look down on the two fishing villages of Bethsaida (Grk <966> Βηθσαϊδά (bayth-saheedah’), meaning “house of fish”) and Capernaum (Grk <2584> Καπερναούμ (cap-er-nah-oom’), meaning “village of comfort”).

Curiously Bethsaida, native home of brothers Andrew and Peter as well as Philip (Jhn.1:40-44) is 2 km (1.24 miles) from the



sea. It is a fishing village because the Bible says it is, and we surmise that it was on a lagoon of the Jordan river which connected to the sea. Some suppose that God sent an earthquake that lifted the area, drained the lagoon, and shrank the sea; others favor that Bethsaida was actually at the site of el-Araj, near the north-eastern shore of the sea.

Chorazin is 3.5 km due north of the Mount of Beatitudes. Jewish writings say its wheat was of

exceptional quality, but our interest here was to examine the excavated synagogue. My notes were sometimes imperceptible, but in excited overture our guide Eli gave out at least all the detail recorded in this short <https://www.seetheholyland.net/chorazin/> article, “Chorazin's Synagogue with Seat of Moses”:

The remains of an elaborate synagogue are a striking feature of the ruins of Chorazin. It was rebuilt in the 3rd or 4th centuries, when the town was thriving.

Constructed of local black basalt stone, the synagogue stood on an elevated area in the center of the town. A broad staircase led to its facade, which faced south towards Jerusalem.

It had one large hall, with stone benches around the walls for the community

to sit during services. The absence of an upper gallery for women suggests the sexes were not segregated at the time it was built.

An unusual find in the ruins of the synagogue was the Seat of Moses, carved out of a single basalt block, from which the Torah would have been read. On its back was an inscription in Aramaic. The original seat is in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem but a copy remains in the ruins at Chorazin.

Decorations carved in the stone include Jewish motifs, geometric designs and patterns incorporating local flowers and animals. The construction methods showed that the builders were skilled in using the basalt stone, which was brittle and easily broken.

Near the synagogue is a ritual bath (mikveh). To the east of the synagogue are two large buildings, dating from the 4th century, which each probably housed an extended family. The rooms were entered from a large cobblestone courtyard.



After Pastor Lee gave some awe and wonder at our being at the Biblical site of Chorazin, he expanded on what Eli said about “Moses' seat” and gave a fitting address on Matthew 23:1-9.

*Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees **sit in Moses' seat**: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their*

*phylacteries*¹, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven (Matt.23:1-9).



Jesus declared that Moses' seat represented the authority of Scripture, not the authority of man nor the authority of man's religions. From Genesis to Maps God is concerned with one's relationship with him, not one's religious practices. Man likes to be lifted up, exalted, given authority, given power, given respect, called pious, called a holy father! They put on a black dress, put their collar on backwards, insist that they be called father and that you confess your sins to them. Sixty-six times the New Testament of the Holy Bible addresses "*presbuteros*" and every time the corrupt Roman Catholic Church's corrupt Latin Vulgate translates it "*priest*" in order to validate their vain black robes, *phylacteries* and "Holy Father" titles. That selfsame doctrine of the Nicolaitans², their doctrine of "Clergy vs Laity" got passed right on to all Protestant "religions" and God still hates it. I coveted a bumper

sticker I saw this week, it said, "**I am the WRETCH saved in the song!**" That sticker, plus a valid "born-again, saved by the blood, redeemed from hell, converted to Christ" salvation testimony should be required from everyone that would suppose themselves to be "Clergy!" ... but then they wouldn't. They would be satisfied to be called a little "p" preacher of the capital "g" Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
 Now ransomed from sin and a new life begun,
 Sing praise to the Father and praise to the Son.
 Saved by the blood of the Crucified One!
 Glory I'm saved! Glory I'm saved!
 My sins are all pardoned, my guilt is all gone!
 Glory I'm saved! Glory I'm saved!
 I am saved by the blood of the Crucified One. *S. J. Henderson*

My friend Pastor Dewy Stewart, pastor of Watertown Baptist Temple, Watertown NY,

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- 1 (Judaism) "*phylacteries*" either of two small leather cases containing texts from the Hebrew Scriptures (known collectively as tefillin); traditionally worn (on the forehead and the left arm) by Jewish men during morning prayer
 - 2 Re 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the **Nicolaitans**, which I also hate. ... 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the **Nicolaitans**, which thing I hate.

opened his Bible to Matthew 11 and gave an exceptional message from the text, *“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin!”* ... (vr.20-21a). To whom much is given much is required. Chorazin, perched on a hill overlooking Bethsaida and Capernaum, was a town which saw the majority of Christ's ministry. Yet they repented not. The Bible says, *“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Mt.4:17, cf 3:2, Mrk.1:15,6:12, Lu.13:3,5 et al).

A note should be added here about Tyre and Sidon and the evil that they represented. We are quite familiar with the evil of Sodom in Mt.11:23, and their vile sodomites who did abominations before the LORD. The vile evil of Tyre and Sidon was even as despicable. John G. Butler describes these cities in respect to Jezebel's Baal worship. First recall 1Kings21:25, *“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work*



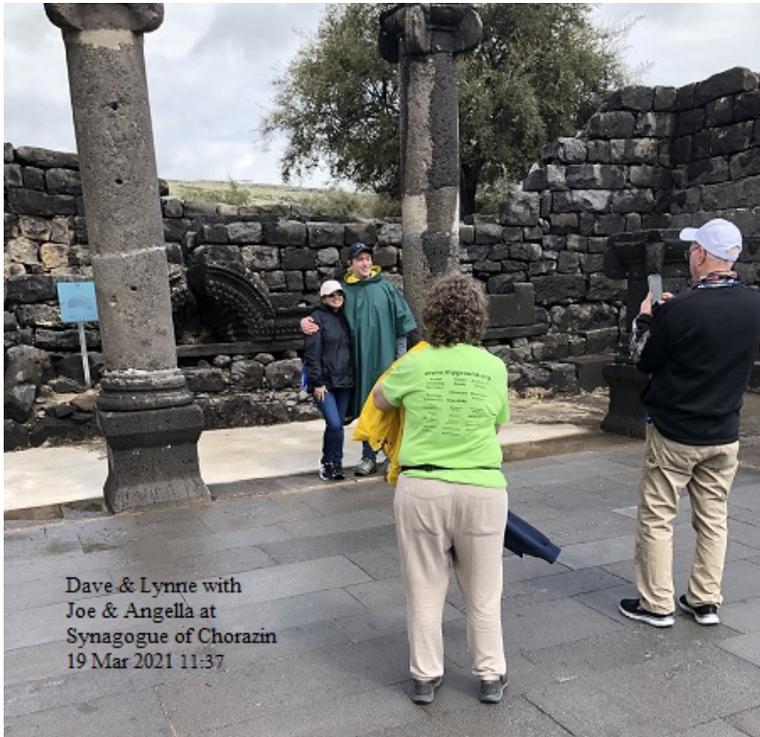
wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Then look at her fathers relationship to Tyre and Sidon ...



Jezebel's father was Ethbaal which was the big reason why Jezebel was so evil. Ethbaal (the name means “Baal is with him”) was originally the priest of the great temple of Astarte (Ashtoreth, the female counterpart of Baal) in Tyre. At the age of 36 he conspired against the Tyrian king... slew him, and seized the throne.

His reign lasted 32 years, and he established a dynasty which continued on the throne at least 62 years longer. Ethbaal headed up the most wicked dynasty then in power. His reign over the Sidonians (also known as the country of Phoenicia with its key cities of Tyre and Sidon) was a great curse to them. His involvement with Baal worship was the key to the great evil of his rule. And his influence upon Jezebel in the matter of Baal worship was the key to Jezabel's

extremely unholy attitudes and conduct which made her the arch enemy of all that was good and right. ...



The religion of Baal was morally, rotten, vile, sensual, and a cruel religion which made immoral sex acts a religious exercise. Fertility rites played a large part in his worship. Licentious dances were prominent, and chambers existed for both male and female prostitutes. Baal religion vilely influence the land by dropping the morals of Israel to incredible depths and destroying character en masse.

The cruelty of Baal religion was

especially evident in its being very intolerant of the worship of Jehovah. It persecuted the worshipers of Jehovah, with great violence. The land was filled with blood from the great oppression of the worshipers of Jehovah by Baal religion. ... Ahab's wife, Jezebel was the leader in this persecution of the worshipers of Jehovah. Being the daughter of Ethbaal, the great high priest of Ashtoreth (female counterpart of Baal) in Tyre, she was well acquainted with Baal religion, and its bloody tactics. Her knowledge of this coupled with her personality and corrupt character, made her a vicious and fanatical promoter of Baal worship and a bloody persecutor of the worshipers of Jehovah. Jezebel was so successful in slaying the prophets of Jehovah, that several times, Elijah complained to God that he thought he was the only one left of the prophets of Jehovah (1Kings 18:22, 19:10, 19:14).

The intolerance of Baal worshipers, for Jehovah worshipers illustrates evil's habit of intolerance. Evil often seeks to be allowed and permitted on the basis of tolerance, freedom of expression, rights, equal time, etc. But once it gets a foothold you can count on is changing its tune about tolerance and equal rights. It will be the sovereign, and any competitors will be cruelly battered into submission. ... Toleration soon enabled evil religion to become the dominant religion; and when that happened, it was no longer toleration but totalitarianism³.

The intolerance of evil for righteousness is seen on every hand in our day. Homosexuals talk tolerance today. They want equal rights; they want to be treated like everyone else. But that talk will end once they get in power⁴.

3 Totalitarianism def A form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator (not restricted by a constitution, laws or opposition etc.) , ... The principle of complete and unrestricted power in government.

4 Baker wrote in 1994, today queers and homos are in power, and all tolerance of "Christianity" has blatantly ended. In case you have missed it LGBT does not stand for Liberty, Guns, Bibles and Trump!

Genesis 19 shows us, that fact. When homos dominate, they will persecute and oppress with cruel viciousness, those who differ with them morally. Communism is the same way. As an example, in China during World War II, the communist insisted on being included in the government. Finally, they were allowed official recognition. Everyone alive today (1994) knows what happened after that. Communism soon took over; and when it did, toleration ceased to exist for non-communist. Protesters for freedom, for other forms of government were machine-gunned down and run over by tanks! Hitler also gained power through the toleration of the Nazis by other political parties in Germany. But when the Nazis got power, they bloodied the opposition into near extinction.⁵

Tyre and Sidon were centers of such Baal worshiping evil, but God says, Chorazin, you should have repented when you saw the Messiah, the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, ... as should we.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John.20:30-31).

It was enlightening and sobering to visit Chorazin. The archaeology digs were ongoing, but the site was superbly accessible; the synagogue was truly amazing, and on this Sunday, we had the whole place to ourselves. After a relaxing visit we made our way to the tour bus. Costia our driver was waiting with open doors and a contagious smile. We had a lunch engagement with Peter's Fish, but first a stop at the more popular archaeological site of a synagogue at Caperaum, "The Town of Jesus."



Jim, Diedrich, David, Dewy, Scott, Andrew, Pete
Bill, Mary-Jane, Joe & Angella, John, Henry
Pastor Lee, Golda, Ed & Bev, Linda, Dave & Lynne, Larry, Sue, Cherie, Abe & Anna

5 Butler, John G., "Elijah The Prophet of Confrontation", LBC Publications, 1994, pg 25, 19-30.