

Most of Jesus' activity around the Sea of Galilee takes place on its western shore, particularly in and around Capernaum. The setting for verses 8:26-39, however, is on the eastern side of the lake. The exact location is uncertain but it would have been in Greco-Roman region known as the Decapolis, or "ten cities". Ancient writers differ as to which cities were the original ten but they stretched from Damascus in the northeast to Philadelphia in the southeast, closer to the Dead Sea than to the Sea of Galilee. All the cities lay east of the Jordan except Scythopolis.

The Bible mentions two cities of the Decapolis: the ancient city Damascus as early as the time of Abraham, and Philadelphia in the letters to the churches in Revelation. Another city, Pella, is known from history as the place of refuge where Christians fled after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

After Jesus drives out the legion of demons, He does

not tell the relieved man to follow Him. Perhaps this is because he is a Gentile. The man is instead commanded to return home and testify to his healing. Could it be that we see the fruit of this testimony in Mark 7:31-32: *"Then [Jesus] returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him."*

We should not fail to notice that the Lord has crossed the broad Sea of Galilee during a violent storm to heal a single man, and restore to him a healthy mind ready to serve God. What a contrast to the Pharisees! As Jesus accuses them in Matthew 23:15, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves."*

Questions:

1. What does the lamp portray in verses 16-17? What is the lesson for us?
2. Explain verse 18.
3. Why should the disciples have more faith during the boat crossing?

