

*The Church of the Servant King*

**Thursday Night Bible Study**

***The Gospel of Matthew***

(Thurs\_Chapter 4B\_The Start of Jesus' Public Ministry)

**JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY IN GALILEE (4:12-17)**

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; 13 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. 14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

15 "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—16 "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS **SAW A GREAT LIGHT**, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM **A LIGHT DAWNED.**"

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

*Matthew 4:12-17*

- The reason for John's imprisonment is not stated here, but is later disclosed in Matthew 14:3. (We will examine this in more detail later).

3 For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. (Matt 14:3)

- The reason for Jesus' departure from Nazareth is explained in Luke 4:16-30.

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,  
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH

THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.  
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,  
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,  
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,  
19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel <sup>(L)</sup>in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

28 And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.

30 But passing through their midst, He went His way. (Lu 4:16-30)

- Jesus settled in Capernaum at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee.
- This region was the area settled by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali after the conquest of Joshua's time.
- In Isaiah 9:1-2, the prophet reflects upon the gloom that spread over the land of Zebulun and Naphtali that was caused by the oppression of the Assyrians.

1 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

2 The people who walk in darkness

Will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them. (Isa 9:1-2)

- He contrasts that situation with the light that will one day shine in the region.
- Matthew draws an application by analogy between Isaiah's Messianic prophecy and Jesus' Advent and by so doing, Matthew creates a veiled reference to the spiritual darkness that pervaded the land in contrast to the spiritual light that Christ provided.
- At the time of Christ, Galilee was no longer under the rule of the Assyrians, but it was still under a foreign yoke of oppression in the form of Rome.
- Therefore, the historical reference Matthew uses is very appropriate to the current set of circumstances.
- In addition, Zebulun and Naphtali correspond to Galilee geographically and Galilee, at the time of Christ, consisted of a mixed Gentile and Jewish character.

#### **THE FIRST DISCIPLES (4:18-22)**

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from

there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

The "Sea of Galilee" is an inland body of water that is about 12 miles wide (at its widest point) by 8.75 miles long (at its longest point). The surface is about 680 feet below sea level and it is known for its unpredictable and violent squalls due to its surrounding geography. It is not really a "sea," but a lake. This lake had several names. The name "Sea of Galilee" is derived from the district in which it is located. Another name – "Lake of Gennesaret" or "Lake of Kinnereth" (Num 34:11; Josh 12:3) – is derived from a plain on its northwest shore. Finally, the name "Sea of Tiberias" is derived from a city that Herod built that is located on the southwest shore.

Simon (Peter) and Andrew came from a city on the lake's west shore named Bethsaida (Jn 1:44) which can be translated "fish town." Evidently, later in their lives, Capernaum became their home (Mark 1:21, 29).

Evidently, Jesus had previously "called" these men. This is why they so quickly followed Jesus in Matthew's account. See the following passages.

*Simon, Andrew, Philip and Nathaniel Follow Jesus at an Earlier Date (Jn 1:35-51)*

35 Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). 43 The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (Jn 1:35-51)

*A Miracle the Previous Night May Have Also Encouraged a Quick Commitment (Lu 5:1-11)*

1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began

teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. (Lu 5:1-11)

James and John, sons of Zebedee, also were called by Jesus and they too immediately followed Him. James and John were repairing their nets when Jesus approached them. In Mark's Gospel, we discover one interesting tidbit of information about their calling that Matthew did not disclose.

20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. (Mk 1:20)

Mark's remark that they left "hired servants" with their father when they followed Jesus is a reminder of the fact that we must not overstate the ignorance and poverty of Jesus' disciples. While they were not trained religious men, they were not illiterate, stupid or incapable of self-sufficiency either. Peter later indicates that they all had given up much to follow Jesus (Matt 19:27).

#### **JESUS HEALS LARGE NUMBERS (4:23-25)**

23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Jesus' ministry included teaching, preaching, and healing. Galilee, the district covered, is small (approximately seventy by forty miles); but according to Josephus, a later 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish historian and Roman citizen, Galilee had 204 cities and villages, each with no fewer than fifteen thousand persons.

This translates into a large population even if this figure refers only to the walled cities and not to the villages (which is not what Josephus says). If we take Josephus at his word, then his numbers correspond to a population of about 3 million. At the rate of two villages or towns per day, several months would be required to visit all of them.

The sheer physical drain must have been enormous. Jesus was an itinerant and of necessity, He would have to repeat the same material again and again and faced the same problems, illnesses, and needs again and again.

The message Jesus preaches is the "good news ("gospel") of the kingdom." The term recurs in Matthew 9:35; 24:14, and 26:13. "Of the kingdom" is an objective genitive: the "good news" concerns the kingdom.

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (Matt 9:35)

"This **gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14)

"For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. 13 "Truly I say to you, wherever **this gospel** is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." (Matt 26:13)

The healings of various diseases among the people are blessings associated with the coming "kingdom" and identify Jesus with the promised Messiah through whom that kingdom would come (cf. 11:2-6; Isa 35:5-6).

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" 4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." (Matt 11:2-6)

3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.

4 Say to those with anxious heart,  
"Take courage, fear not  
Behold, your God will come with vengeance;  
The recompense of God will come,  
But He will save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened  
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy  
For waters will break forth in the wilderness  
And streams in the Arabah. (Isa 35:5-6)

However, while Jesus used such miracles to validate His claim to be the Messiah, He acknowledged the necessity of His sacrificial act of propitiation before the kingdom blessings could be realized. He begins His ministry in Galilee by reading from a prophecy in Isaiah while He was in the synagogue on the Sabbath in Nazareth. Note the portion He excluded from His quotation.

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE  
ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS

SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND  
RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO  
ARE OPPRESSED,  
19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Lu 4:16-21)

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;

2 To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD [*Note that the remainder of the verse is not quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:19*]

**And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn.** (Isa 61:1-2)

In Matthew 4:25, Matthew records the lengths to which people went to seek out and find Jesus in order to give Him a hearing.

25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. (Matt 4:25)

The Decapolis (lit., "Ten Cities") refers to a region east of Galilee extending from Damascus in the north to Philadelphia in the south, ten cities (under varied reckonings) making up the count.

Despite arguments to the contrary, the word "follow" does not necessarily indicate solid discipleship. It may, as here, refer to those who at some particular time followed Jesus around in his itinerant ministry and thus were loosely considered his disciples.