

MATTHEW 4:12 - 25

THE MESSAGE, THE CALLING, THE FRUIT

We left off last week with Jesus having successfully fought off the temptations of the Devil with the written WORD.

This week we see that Jesus begins His ministry immediately after the imprisonment of John the Baptist.

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

***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 sat in darkness have seen a great light,
And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death
Light has dawned."***

If you read all of the gospels, you will quickly see that there were many things which took place at this time, but many of the details have been omitted by Matthew at present. The details of John's arrest will be covered in chapter 11. The calling of all the disciples is not covered in this chapter of Matthew but are given elsewhere. We will deal with them when we come to them. But this serves to show us how and why the synoptic Gospels are not just copies of each other. Each author had a particular focus and perspective he wished to relay to the reader. Matthew doesn't focus on these things at this time because he is interested in showing who Jesus was and what specifically He did. The focus is on the message and the messenger and not some of the other facts which are mentioned elsewhere

and by others. Please keep these things in mind as we study the Gospels. It will eliminate much confusion.

We read in verse 12 that upon the arrest of John, Jesus “departed” to Galilee. The verb translated, “departed” literally means to “withdraw” even “retreat.”

I cannot count how many times I have been asked, “Why didn’t Jesus do something about John’s imprisonment? He abandoned John.”

Let’s pursue this for a moment. What was Jesus supposed to do? Was He to lead a team of fishermen to the jail and bust John out of prison? If He had, we might not be reading the Sermon on the Mount here shortly. Was Jesus supposed to bail John out of jail? I think not.

If we look at things from God’s perspective we can see that this was actually perfect timing. John himself said he had to decrease that Jesus could increase.

Was Jesus running from the authorities by going to Galilee? No, He most certainly was not. The same Herod that arrested John was also the governor of Galilee. He could just have easily arrested Jesus in Capernaum as in Jerusalem.

The truth is that it was time for Jesus to begin His ministry and He chose to do it in Galilee.

Galilee is northeast of Jerusalem on the west side and northern end of the Sea of Galilee. It was more rural as far as the Jewish villages went, but wasn’t a backwater. In fact it was a very populace place in those days. It was much more cultured and important than Nazareth. It had a very large gentile population. Gentile began to move into the area shortly after Israel was conquered by Assyria in the middle of the 8th century BC. To the east of the Sea of Galilee was the Decapolis, so named because of the 10 large

cities in the region. This was a very strategic move by Jesus. Peter allowed his home to become the headquarters of Jesus' ministry. The reason for this strategic choice can be seen in the fulfillment quotation used by Matthew of Isaiah 9:1,2. The original context dealt with the fact that so many gentiles now lived in that region. The gentiles were seen to be in darkness due to their ignorance of the Word of God. Matthew simply reapplies this to his times as well as bringing emphasis to the spiritual darkness of the Jews of his day. This can be seen by Jesus repeating verbatim the same message as John, "Turn your lives around because the kingdom of Heaven (literally heavens) is here!" It is from this same region that Jesus will send out the Apostles to all the Gentiles. In the NT Jesus, as well as His Word are referred to as light. When we become believers we also are said to have the light.

The people in that region, both Jew and Gentile like were thought to be in darkness. The gentiles because they were gentiles, ignorant and/ or devoid of the Word, and the Jews of the region because they were far away from Jerusalem - the center of Judaism. The rural people were not thought to be as well versed in the Word as those in Jerusalem. Therefore Jesus is bringing light to those thought to be in greatest need of it. This is where the vast majority of Jesus' ministry takes place, as we will see.

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

Once again, Jesus didn't reinvent the wheel. He continued with John's message. The terms "repent" and "kingdom of Heaven" were not new ones to the people of the area, at least not the Jews. They had heard these before. What was new was that the authority with which Jesus and John declared them. Jesus didn't say, **"Repent SO THAT the kingdom can come."** He said, **"Repent (change your life) BECAUSE the kingdom is here!"**

Jesus began by repeating what John said. There had to be a re-prioritizing of the lives of the people. We will see that more clearly in a moment. But the same is true for us today. Jesus is saying literally, “Get converted!” or simply, “change!” He does not say what to turn from specifically; the emphasis is on turning from our preoccupations (sin and goods) TOWARD God. What ever keeps one from turning TOWARD the coming kingdom is that from which one should turn.

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They immediately 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. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

We have to be careful not to just read over this. This is not how things ordinarily worked.

- Kung Fu movies as opposed to Jesus choosing His disciples.
- The call here is not to salvation but to discipleship.
- They responded immediately. If its not instant its not true obedience.
- Andrew at the very least was already familiar with Jesus, as he was disciple of John. Most likely, all four were already familiar with Jesus. There was already a relationship here.
- Does everyone called to Jesus have to drop their nets? Yes and no. Remember, this is a call to discipleship and not salvation. “Follow me and you will catch people.”
- It was a call to a lifestyle, not an event. Rabbinical students lived, followed and mimicked their teachers. We are to do the same with Jesus.
- The apostles didn’t leave fishing altogether. We read of them fishing later on in the Gospels.

- But there is a change in their lives. Peter and Andrew dropped their nets. James and John dropped their nets AND left their father.
- By obeying Jesus' call, they are relinquishing commitment to family businesses, their assets and their livelihood, this would have a great effect on their families and relationships.
- There is a cost in being a disciple. Our lives are re-prioritized. Time has to be made for it. There is an investment of time, talent and treasury.
- The apostles had families too! They still had to budget their time so as to be able to reach disciples. The Cost of Discipleship.
- The church throughout the centuries has struggled with the temptation to be "keepers of the aquarium rather than fishers of men." (E.V. Hill)

MT. 8:18 - 22

- 18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. 19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."
- 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
- 21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
- 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

To make disciples we have to invest in people. We have to invest ourselves into people.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

- The difference between preaching and teaching. The difference in locales and purpose.
- Jesus healed all manner of sickness. Notice the differentiation between physical, mental and spiritual maladies.
- Jesus is building a following and a community.
- Geographical areas cover all four points of the compass including Jerusalem as the center of the earth.

Mt. 5:13 - 16

Believers Are Salt and Light

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

How will you respond to the call of discipleship? How will your life change in response to the call? Be fishers of men!