



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Called to Discipleship **Study Scripture: Matthew 4:12-22**

Lesson 5, March 30, 2019

Key Verse

*Then He said to them, "Follow Me; and I will make you fishers of men".
Matthew 4:19*

In our lesson we will see the events occurring after Jesus facing a most dangerous kind of temptation where His person as the Son of God and therefore His identity and His calling are challenged in the most powerful way possible.

We have seen how the wily and completely evil Satan challenged Jesus' identity as the Son of God and tried to tempt Him to go down a different path than that laid out for Him as the Servant of Jehovah.

We should look at Jesus and how He behaved very carefully. Jesus resisted this tremendous temptation and as a result, we are saved. So when Jesus chose to live in obedience, in God's way, as the Son of God, the plan of redemption was successfully completed.

Jesus knew that the way of redemption was not easy and He knew that He had to achieve the goal, the service that God required of Him, in the right way. He had to show that He trusted His Father completely, and was obedient to His Father's instructions. It is written: The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who

is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

This was the position of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. The prophet spoke and predicted what He would be like, His personality and His commitment to His Father's words and Jesus fulfilled all that was spoken of Him.

Note also the encouragement of the prophet Isaiah to all of us, after he spoke of Messiah's nature and determination. We are called on to do likewise.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

One writer comments on the opening verses of Matthew 4 as follows:

"Matthew 4:1-11 should be considered in light of who Jesus is, what he is called to do, and how he fulfills his call. The passage, in other words, is about Jesus. Matthew invites us to contemplate Jesus.

Certainly, there is application for us in this passage regarding how to resist temptation.

Jesus is our example (Philippians 2:5).

But how many of us have used the accounts of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness as a formula for resisting temptation and given in nevertheless time after time?

The passage is not a formula for resisting temptation; it is an invitation to consider Jesus, who resisted temptation for us and went on to win our redemption.

And if we see that, and if we see him and appreciate and adore and worship him because of what he went through for us, we'll be the kind of people who resist temptation not because we can follow a formula but because we love Jesus."

Hopefully, we would see that the real enemy is Satan. Israel might have thought that their enemy was Rome, and we might think that those who oppress us as we live our lives are the real enemy. But if Israel believed that and if we mistakenly focus and do not believe that Satan is our real enemy we are in for a shock.

In the first temptation, the devil tempted Jesus to use His own power. Then when that failed, in the second temptation, he shifted ground and tempted Jesus by trying to persuade Him to force His Father hand, or put God to the test. Then when that failed, in his third temptation, Satan offered Jesus his own power to achieve the goal that God had set for Him. That temptation was to bring about redemption without the cross.

"The devil offers Jesus the ultimate fulfillment of his vocation, the fulfillment of his deepest dreams?

The call to bring righteousness and peace to the entire world is deep in his being, and that dream is now spread out before his eyes. This is the goal of his call, where it all leads.

And he can have it all now! And he can have it without suffering!

God's way to universal sovereignty is long and arduous and, from all appearances at the outset, darn near impossible. The temptation is to cut to the chase, to get on with it, to take the easy way. The temptation is to forget the cross. The temptation to avoid the cross would dog Jesus for the rest of his life."

Can you now see the parallels in your life? Can you see how Satan approaches you and tempts you, as he looks at your deepest desires, your long-held dreams, what you really want from life, what you want to be, and who you want people to think you are?

He knows us very well. He and his cronies always watch us very carefully, even when we are sleeping. He can anticipate what we are going to do by our body language, our facial expressions, our past approaches to problems in life, and of course our constant neglect to strenuously follow the commands of God. He will even put ideas into our head. He crafts his temptations to make us fall quickly and to keep us down once we have fallen.

We should be mindful that Jesus is the “Son of God”, and we are also amazingly called “sons of God” (Galatians 3:26).

So as we hear the hiss of the serpent in our heart, and hear how he accuses us, calling us idiots, worthless and unlovable people, not good enough, incompetent, silly, just remember that we must keep on trusting in God for one day Satan will be silenced.

We are to trust in God, listen to all His commandments, follow His words, depend on the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to do His will. We certainly cannot do it in our own strength.

We are now looking at a summary of Jesus’ early messianic ministry and so we should be careful not to get the impression one writer warns us about for it does not describes this early ministry as “that of a triumphal progress of a newly appointed Messiah. He sweeps through the northern regions and popular enthusiasm, and there are bursts of fresh spiritual power as the Lord Jesus begins and continues his early ministry”.

We should really look at this Study as the King calling some of his earliest disciples or subjects for a King must have His subjects.

All the necessary preparations for the ministry had been finished when Jesus had been baptized and the Temptation of Jesus had ended with the retreat of the Devil. Jesus had been crowned at His baptism, God had spoken from heaven telling us who He was and what He would do. We have been told that His birth was a supernatural one and that the supernatural power of God could be seen as He was born of a virgin. Then He was worshiped by Gentiles, protected by the power of God from the wicked King Herod, and His ministry had been spoken about by His forerunner John the Baptist who stated that the One coming after him was greater and mightier than he was, and as a matter of fact he was not even worthy of loosing the sandals that were on His feet.

We are therefore looking at the truly qualified messianic king whom God had chosen and who have succeeded and passed every test. Now the time had come when the Lord Jesus Christ must go forth to His task.

Note particularly that none of the evangelists had recorded the entire public life of Jesus and only included one that made sense according to their particular goal or design. They all excluded some evidence and spoke very little of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ between His Temptation by Satan and the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Matthew does not give us a chronology of events and teachings of Jesus but makes certain general statements about Him and what He did as our Text will show.

We know from John 1: 19 to 4:42 that one year had elapsed between verse 11 and verse 12 in this chapter and that during this time several significant events had occurred.

In chapter 2:1-11 we know that Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding of Cana.

In 2: 12-25 we are told that He performed His first cleansing of the Temple.

In John 3:1-21 Jesus led Nicodemus to accept Him as Lord and it seems clear that Nicodemus became a saved man.

In John 3 :22-26 John gave his final public testimony.

In John 4:1-42 Jesus ministered in Samaria at the well of Sychar.

Luke 4 :14-16 tells us that Jesus spent some time in Nazareth shortly after being baptized in the Jordan and we are told He got up in the synagogue and read a Scripture that prophesied of His coming, after which He said that the prophecy had been fulfilled in their hearing.

Sometime later we knew that Jesus revisited Nazareth and then left saying that He knew accusing them with the saying that a prophet was not without honour except in his own hometown.

Our Study therefore will look at how Jesus called His disciples, why He chose the headquarters that he in fact chose and what that meant, what His message was all about, the importance of interpreting prophecy, and the difficulties involved in that endeavour; we will see where Jesus preached and why, and why the location of preaching might be seen as too tough for success but it might sometimes prove most fruitful.

Note that humble workers are often chosen to do exceptionally lofty work which requires tact and perseverance, patience, and sometimes frequent failure.

THE TEXT

Verse 12. The action from the last verse of the previous chapter continues unbroken.

There Jesus Christ was declared the Son of God, and the Spirit of God descended on Him at His baptism by John the Baptist. Jesus' anointing was witnessed. We also notice according to John's words; with the arrival of Messiah, his, John the Baptist's witness would decrease, while Jesus' witness would increase.

The trigger for Jesus' more public ministry which is recorded by Matthew is the fact that Herod cast John the Baptist into prison. John the Baptist had been preaching about the need for repentance among the powerful as well as among the poor and it is quite something to realize that it is unlikely that Herod Antipas would have imprisoned John if the religious authorities had supported John. Clearly truth from God was not something that

the religious authorities and the Jewish rulers of the day prized and we see already that the work of Jesus was not going to be all roses.

John's work was clearly now at an end and guided by the Holy Spirit and the words of John the Baptist himself that he would decrease and Jesus would increase, it was clear to Jesus that it was time for His ministry to begin in earnest. Jesus therefore departed from His hometown of Nazareth never again to return to live in it. It was as if he was shutting the door on the life that lay behind Him, and He now opened the door that stood in front of him, with a new chapter beginning while the old chapter ended.

We often do not learn that there must often be an end to the old ways and old life for these moments of decision often come in our lives and there is required to be as one writer says a symbolic finality in our move. When we do come to Jesus there must be a surgical cutting and there can be no vacillating and indecision between the two courses of action, for one road leads to death while the other road leads to life eternal.

It is to be noted carefully that Jesus was not simply a mere successor to John the Baptist, but He had begun to preach before John the Baptist had ceased to preach, and the forerunner distinctly and many times acknowledged his own inferiority and stressed that his work was only designed to be temporary. See John 1:29-37.

It was not that Jesus was afraid of anything for the word used to describe His motives does not indicate the circumstances indicate that Jesus withdrew from Judea to avoid the consequences that would flow from a successful ministry of preaching and healing with His fame spreading far and wide so that many crowds from the adjacent regions followed Him. The Pharisees in Jerusalem who had been jealously watching John the Baptist would now be turning their jealous attention to His influence for they had certainly heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist. See John 4:1. But Jesus knew that He could be successfully attacked before the time appointed for the Cross.

Note at the same time that we cannot say that Jesus withdrew from Judea into Galilee to avoid Herod for Judea was not in Herod's dominions but Galilee was.

Verse 13-15. Jesus now came out of Judea and went into Galilee dwelling in Capernaum. Jesus would certainly have known that Isaiah 9: 14 through 16 had stated that the official messianic ministry would take place in Galilee in the very area where the Assyrians had brought a great deal of terror, distress and doom to the children of Israel in the 8th Century Before Christ. Both Isaiah and Jesus therefore saw that the messianic light had to arise in Galilee of the Gentiles in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali in the area of the sea beyond the Jordan.

Joshua 9:1-27 had told us that Galilee had been assigned to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Zebulon when Israel first came into the land. These tribes had never completely expelled the native Canaanites and so the population of Galilee from that time was always mixed. Foreign invasions were commonplace for if an enemy came from the north and east from Syria they would come first into Galilee. In the eighth century B.C the Assyrians had

completely overrun the land and the vast majority of the population had been taken away into exile and strangers had been settled in the land bringing a large injection of foreign non-Jewish blood into Galilee.

Till the Second century B.C Galilee was largely in Gentile hands but when the Jews returned from exile under Nehemiah and Ezra many came south to live in Jerusalem. One historian tells us a little bit of the history of Galilee to explain why the prophecies had said that Messiah Jesus would begin His official ministry in a place such as Galilee. We read: "In 164 B.C Simon Maccabaeus chased the Syrians north from Galilee back to their own territory; and on his way back he took with him to Jerusalem the remnants of the Galileans who were left.

The most amazing thing of all is that in 104 B.C. Aristobulus reconquered Galilee for the Jewish nation, and proceeded forcibly to circumcise the inhabitants of Galilee, and thus to make them Jews whether they liked it or not. History had compelled Galilee to open its doors to new strains of blood and to new ideas and to new influences.

The natural characteristics of the Galileans, and the preparation of history had made Galilee the one place in all Palestine where a new teacher with a new message had any real chance of being heard, and it was there that Jesus began his mission and first announced his message".

All of the great roads of the world passed through Galilee. The road to the east passed through Galilee to the borders of the land, and the Way of the Sea referred to in the passage led from Damascus through Galilee all the way down to Egypt and Africa, so that the traffic of the world therefore passed through Galilee. God had so worked it out that here was the central geographical location where the land was invaded and conquered over and over again and foreigners had come and gone and had flooded over it

Galilee was small but it was known proverbially as having the most fertile land in Palestine and therefore it was densely populated. Josephus the Jewish historian tells us the population was enormous with over 204 villages. He describes them as follows: "They were ever fond of innovations, and by nature disposed to changes, and delighted in seditions".

So they were ever ready to follow a leader and to begin an insurrection. They were notoriously quick in temper and given to quarrelling. Yet withal they were the most chivalrous of men. "The Galileans," said Josephus, "have never been destitute of courage". "Cowardice was never a characteristic of the Galileans". "They were ever more anxious for honor than for gain". The inborn characteristics of the Galileans were such as to make them most fertile ground for a new gospel to be preached to them".

One should therefore not think that Galilee was a poor and degraded area, for instead it was a well populated and most fertile, innovative, and productive land though with a mixed population. The Pharisees and scribes and leaders in Jerusalem however did not like it for the Galileans were never submissive to the teachings of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Herodians who therefore because they collaborated in varying degrees to the Romans, spread pretty bad rumors about them and their practice in creating seditions and uprisings against the Romans, something that the people in Jerusalem did not encourage.

Little is known of where Capernaum had been located and each site is based on guesses, is unknown, even though there are two reasonable guesses as to where it might have been located we are in the dark as to its original location. But we know it was near the seaside. Its name really means "Nahum's village".

Verse 16. The important thing is the prophecy describes the area and the people as being sitting in darkness, sitting in the region of shadow and death. According to the wisdom of God they were in spiritual darkness and rebellions against God and that means that they were in the very shadow of death, not much better than the old Pharasaic religious people in Jerusalem who were the first to hear of the Messiah's coming and see the Messiah but who rejected their Messiah since he did not come from among their spiritually elite group.

It does not mean that these people had no knowledge of the word of God, no sense of conscience, did not care about other men and their needs, or that they always did every sin imaginable. It meant that their minds were touched and their eyes were blinded with the sin that descended upon the human race from the Garden of Eden. They were all together in one place sitting in darkness, with no light of God that had not been quenched. Clearly they were not as bad or as wicked as they could be, but they are now incapable of saving themselves because their nature was such that they were made helpless.

So are all men who have not been brought by the Holy Spirit into Christ. Everyone who has not been brought to Christ are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. They might look good and presentable and may dress and speak very well and are eloquent and intellectual when making their excuses, but in fact they are dead. Our task as believers is to warn them of this and to show them the way out of their death.

Note Jesus came to bring the light of God to them. Later unfortunately He had to condemn this once highly exalted city and said it was cast down into destruction. See Matthew 11:23.

The shadow of death or literally death shade is really a figure of speech referring to the densest of darkness. These people lost their way in this dense darkness for they were degraded and oppressed because of their situation and exposure to attacks from other nations and their actual mixture with the Gentiles. All the Jews were in spiritual darkness but the Galileans were regarded as inferior and despised because they did not have the religious privileges as those in Jerusalem had. But they certainly weren't any more morally corrupt than the others in Judea.

Verse 17. Jesus' message to these people was repentance. One writer tells us: "When men are hopeless, then undeserved grace comes. And here the public ministry of the Lord Jesus begins".

Now the time had come, and so "from that time" begun the public ministry of announcing the coming of the kingdom of heavens.

We now see the character of Jesus' ministry. Jesus had a ministry of teaching, that is, explaining the message.

Then Jesus had a ministry of preaching, which is the proclamation of the message.

Then Jesus had a third ministry, the ministry of healing, which were the miracles designed to identify the Messiah. He would do a lot of ministry in the synagogue where he would speak and the people who wanted to study the word of God would gather..

The word "preach" means "to herald" or "to proclaim" and it presents the picture of an individual that goes out with a very important message and shouts it out. The word means the proclamation of an herald from a King. This would have three aspects:

First, the Herald had in his voice a note of certainty.

He would not power to say anything except what was certain. When Jesus spoke it was with a sense of certainty. There was no doubt about the Word of God and what it meant.

Next, the voice of a herald carries the note of authority. He was laying out the law of the King and there was no "probables" or "maybes".

Next, the message of the Herald would be coming from a source beyond himself for it was coming from the King. It was not an expression of his own personal opinion. When Jesus spoke it was the voice of God the Father speaking to men.

So when Jesus spoke He commanded, "Repent". He was in fact telling the people in Galilee to turn from their own ways, to lift up their eyes to heaven, to reverse the direction in which they were going, to stop walking away from God, to turn to God, and walk toward God.

In order to receive eternal life they had to repent. The Kingdom of heaven had new rules and required a new way of life, a new God, and a new family.

Verses 18-19. Life in Galilee revolved around what some called the Sea of Galilee which was 13 miles long from north to south and eight miles across from east to west. It had many names. It was really quite small but on its shores there were more than nine well populated cities. It was thick with fish and thick with fishing boats. Josephus tells us that a certain expedition had no difficulty in assembling 240 fishing boats to set out from the town of Tarichaea on a project, so we knew this was a bustling, active area.

Jesus walked along the shore and here it records the meeting of Jesus with Peter and Andrew and James and John. This was not the first meeting of these people. That first meeting is recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 1. Shortly after Jesus' baptism by John, one of John's disciples named Andrew heard John speak about Jesus and left John to follow Jesus. He then recruited his brother Peter. Philip was later added to the disciples and he recruited Nathaniel.

So as Jesus walked he called Peter and Andrew James and John whom He had met before as John's epistle tells us for these men were already disciples of John the Baptist

and had already talked to Jesus on other occasions, but in this moment they came to Jesus who challenged them to throw in their lot with Him and leave everything they had behind them.

Now note that these were not men of great education, of scholarship, influence, great wealth, or from a great social background. But note that they were not lazy people but were really only hard working people who one could say had no great future ahead of them.

These men were fishermen and fishermen possessed great qualities that would turn them into great fishers of men. One writer lists some of them and tells us that we too should have them or develop them if we have to carry on the great commission successfully:

1. Fishermen must learn to wait patiently until the fish would take the bait. If he is restless and quick to move he will never make a fishermen. It is but rarely in preaching or teaching that we will see great results. We must learn to wait.
 2. He must have courage. He must be ready to risk and to face the fury of the sea and of the gale. The good preacher and teacher must be well aware that there is always a danger in telling men the truth. The man who tells the truth, more often than not takes his reputation and his life in his hands.
 3. He must have a eye for the right moment. The wise fisherman knows well that there are times when it is hopeless to fish. He knows when to cast and when not to cast. The good preacher and teacher chooses his moment. There are times when men will welcome the truth, and times when they will resent the truth. There are times when the truth will move them, and times when the truth will harden them in their opposition to the truth. The wise preacher and teacher knows that there is a time to speak and a time to be silent.
 4. He must fit the Bait to the fish. One fish will rise to one bait and another to another.
 5. The wise fisherman must keep himself out of sight. If he obtrudes his own presence, even his own shadow, the fish will certainly not bite. The wise preacher and teacher will always seek to present men, not with himself, but with Jesus Christ.
- So Jesus takes the initiative and cause ordinary men to work with Him. He is the one who calls. He always will call His disciples and His sheep will hear His voice and will follow Him. He will now give them the equipment, guidance, and experience that they need.

Verses 20-22. So these men who had known Jesus, had been talking and learning from Him, and given that He was pointed out and recommended as the Messiah by John the Baptist, left everything and followed Jesus. They obeyed and Peter would later remember this and remind Jesus when others had left Him that they “had left all” and followed Him.

Jesus would remind him that they would have great reward for doing that.

CONCLUSION

We now see clearly how the plan of God determined in the ages past was put into effect and prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. God knows what is best and He knows how to do things in the best way.

We also see clearly a powerful picture of the lost. They are blind, unable to save themselves, and are in a most helpless state.

God graciously brings light and men that are most unlikely to respond respond to Him. Now all who are called and invited to join Jesus will in fact come to Him. They will refuse to come to the invited Banquet for they are focusing on the things of the material world. But note these men called to be disciples were different. They are obedient. But note also that they listen to the message first and look at their teacher first, and then they respond to the commanding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The love of God is certainly shown. God says, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men".

This shows us the amazing desire of God that men should be saved. We too should respond and participate in that work of salvation with God.

The book of Proverbs says, "He that winneth souls is wise".

May you all be wise and reap the rewards, the unbelievable and indescribable rewards that God has awaiting those that love Him and follow Him.