

IV. The Ministry of Jesus Begins (4:12-25; 9:9-13)

After Jesus triumphed over Satan's temptations, the Bible records that "angels came and were ministering to him" (4:11). For certain, Jesus' human flesh was weak after 40 days in the wilderness without food. In most study Bibles, this next section of Scripture will be identified as the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The Synoptic Gospels omit several early events in the public ministry of Jesus. These events are found in John 1:19 – 4:45 and include many familiar events in the life of Jesus including: John the Baptist identifying Jesus as the Messiah, the miracle of the water turned to wine at the wedding in Cana, the first cleansing of the temple, and the encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

"There has been and is still a great deal of wrestling, so to speak, with these events as they are recorded in the different Gospels, to arrange them in a perfect chronological order, or, as it is said, to harmonize the Gospel record... To charge the writers of the Gospel with ignorance of certain facts is charging the Holy Spirit with it. In each Gospel the Holy Spirit makes prominent the events which are calculated to impress the specific teachings of the respective Gospels, and He has always arranged the events in such an order to suit Himself. Every Gospel is therefore to be studied and read separately from the others. They are in their contents not the mechanical reporting of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfolding of the blessed person and work of our Lord and Saviour as King of the Jews [in Matthew], servant in obedience [in Mark], Son of man [in Luke] and the Only-Begotten of the Father [in John]."¹

According to Matthew's account, Jesus' public ministry did not begin until John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned. "The reason for John's imprisonment was not presented here, but it was stated later (14:3)."² We find out later that Herod the tetrarch imprisoned John the Baptist because John had publicly condemned him for having an immoral relationship with Herodias, his sister-in-law. He wanted to execute him immediately but feared the backlash of the people of Jerusalem, so he just put him in prison. Later in Matthew 14, Herodias' daughter manipulated her father to execute John as a birthday promise to her. Not wanting to publicly renounce the promise made to his daughter, he carried out the beheading of this prophet.

A. Preaching in Galilee

When John the Baptist was arrested, where did Jesus go? Why?

- He withdrew into Galilee. "He went from Nazareth and settled in Capernaum (Luke 4:16-30 explains why he left Nazareth).
 - Luke 4:16-30 explains that Jesus went to His home town of Nazareth at the beginning of His public ministry. The people in the synagogue became angry as Jesus presented the eternal truth that He is the Messiah.

¹ Gaebelin 97.

² TBKC 27.

- In Luke 4:24, He proclaims, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown,” so Jesus moved on to live in the city of Capernaum.
- The purpose for Jesus’ return to Galilee was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah “that light would come to this region.”
 - Isaiah 9:1-2 are quoted by Luke in verses 15-16.
 - Isaiah 9 also contains the famous passage, “For unto us a child is born...” (verse 6), which is a clear prophecy of the Messiah.
- It is interesting that the “light” of the Messiah would go first to the “most oppressed, the darkest and the most corrupt province.”³
 - All of the Jewish elite despised Galilee. “An inhabitant of Galilee was looked upon as... an ignorant countryman.”⁴
 - Consider the account from John 1 of Jesus’ call of Philip and Nathanael.

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 anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

What was the message that Jesus preached in Galilee?

- Verse 17 – “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- This was the same message that had been preached by John the Baptist.
- “The two fold message of John was now proclaimed by the Messiah... Repentance was mandatory if fellowship with God was to be enjoyed.”⁵

B. Selection of His Disciples

Where did Jesus find these first four disciples?

- The simple answer is that they were fishing in and mending nets near the Sea of Galilee when he found them, but this is not the first time Jesus met these men.

³ Gaebelien 99.

⁴ Ibid 100.

⁵ TBKC 27.

- In John 1:35-42, we find that Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptist.
- He was with John on the day that he identified Jesus as the “Lamb of God.”
- I always struggled to understand how these men could just drop everything to follow Jesus when it seemed that he had just met them.
 - Understanding that their encounter with Jesus in John 1 occurred before John the Baptist was arrested and their call in Matthew 4 occurred after his arrest, helps me to understand how they could follow Him.
 - They knew exactly what they were doing and who they were following when Jesus called them to follow Him in Matthew 4.

What were the occupations of these four men?

- They were fishermen!
 - Peter and Andrew were fishing at the moment Jesus called them.
 - James and John were mending their nets when Jesus called.
 - “They were not from the class of wise men, learned in the written and oral law, but they were fishers.”⁶
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 – “²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

What did Jesus tell the men to do?

- He told them to “follow” Him.
 - Their obedience was immediate and without question.
 - Imagine all the questions we might have had...
 - Where are we going? What do I need to pack? How long will we be gone?

⁶ Gaebelein 101.

- What about all our fishing equipment? What should I do with that?
- How will we support ourselves? Where will we get food and clothes?
- What about our father? Doesn't the Bible say to honor father and mother?
- We often overcomplicate the issue of obedience with too much concern for temporal things. We need to focus more on things with eternal value!
- He told them that they would become “fishers of men.”
 - “The message of the coming kingdom needed to be proclaimed widely so that many could hear and could become, by repentance, subjects of His kingdom.”⁷
 - They were going to “cast their nets” to bring in as many as possible to the kingdom.
 - Bringing the souls of men and women all over the world into the kingdom of God—that is something of eternal value!

The only other record of Jesus calling His disciples in the Book of Matthew is found in chapter nine. What were the circumstances of this event in Matthew 9:9?

- A tax collector named Matthew was sitting at his tax collector's booth when Jesus called out to him saying, “Follow me.” Just like the others, he immediately obeyed.
- Fishermen were not highly regarded in the culture of that day, but tax collectors were hated because they were seen as traitors—placing their allegiance with Rome.

C. Ministry to the Multitudes

“The work of the Lord was not limited to preaching. His deeds were as important as His words, for a great question in the minds of the Jews would be, ‘Can this One claiming to be Messiah perform the works of Messiah?’ Matthew 4:23 is an important summary statement crucial to Matthew's theme.”⁸ There are three aspects of ministry done by Jesus here in Matthew 4:23—teaching, preaching, and healing diseases.

⁷ TBKC 27.

⁸ Ibid 28.

Jesus' Teaching Ministry

Where was Jesus' teaching ministry done?

- This ministry of teaching was “exclusively done in their synagogues.”⁹
- By teaching only in synagogues, the places where Jews gathered for worship, Jesus' teaching ministry was focused specifically on Jewish people.
- Jesus went to synagogues throughout the region of Galilee.

What was the content of Jesus' teaching?

- When Jesus taught in the synagogues, he spent time “expounding the scriptures, the law and the prophets.”¹⁰
- The Gospel of Luke gives further information about Jesus' teaching in Luke 4:16-21.
¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”
²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus' Preaching Ministry

Where was Jesus' preaching ministry done? And to whom did he preach?

- Most likely, Jesus' preaching ministry was primarily done in public settings.
- It is also likely that He was preaching to large crowds of people—both Jews and Gentiles—“from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond Jordan.”

⁹ Gaebelein 103.

¹⁰ Ibid.

What was the content of Jesus' preaching?

- He continued to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.
- “His message was that God was moving to fulfill His covenantal program with Israel and to establish His kingdom on the earth.”¹¹

Jesus' Healing Ministry

What was the effect of Jesus' healing ministry?

- It made Him famous.
- It kept Him very busy.
- It provided validation for His claim to be the Messiah.
 - “This authenticated that He is indeed the Prophet, for His words were backed up by authenticating signs.
 - “All these actions should have convinced the Jewish people that God was moving in history to accomplish His purposes.
 - “They were responsible to get ready by repenting from their sins and acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.”¹²

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 1/13/2019)

¹¹ TBKC 28.

¹² Ibid.