

Called to Follow

Matt 4:12-22
SS Lesson for 03/31/2019

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 3:1-9

OUTLINE

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Matt 4:19

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Because God controls the success of plans (Prov 16:3)

Because God controls the steps of man (Prov 16:9)

Because God's purpose will always be done (Prov 19:21)

To be a light to the world (16)

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In the spring of 2014, Dr. Kent Brantley went to Liberia to serve as a medical missionary. One day he woke up with the realization that he himself was about to become a patient—he had contracted the Ebola virus. His goal transitioned from saving lives for the glory of God to being a Christian example of faith whether he lived or died. “We didn’t believe that because we were going there as medical missionaries we would automatically be divinely protected from getting Ebola.” Indeed, he was right. Far from being protected from a dread disease because he was a follower of Christ, it was the fact that he was a dedicated follower of Christ that put him in the position of contracting Ebola! Christians are reasonable people. We are solid citizens and reliable employees and mates. We try to avoid excess in all areas of our lives. But what about the radical demands of following Jesus? Is moderation a virtue there? Have we placed “reasonable” restrictions on discipleship?

The book of Matthew is commonly recognized as being “the most Jewish” of the four Gospels. This is evident from the outset in Matthew’s use of the numeric value of King David’s name as a memory device in Jesus’ genealogy (Matthew 1:17). Using more than 60 quotes from the Old Testament, Matthew explains the life of Jesus from birth to resurrection. The flight to and from Egypt is reminiscent of the nation of Israel’s enslavement in and delivery from Egypt. Herod’s opposition to Jesus mirrors that of Pharaoh to Moses. The parallels are many! Matthew notes that John the Baptist’s preaching is also according to Scripture, preparing the way for Jesus. Matthew’s Jewishness is also evident in his use of the phrase “kingdom of heaven” rather than “kingdom of God.” The former expression occurs more than 30 times in the New Testament, and all of them are in the book of Matthew. “Kingdom of heaven” is a respectful Jewish way of saying “kingdom of God,” since God’s name was not spoken by devout Jews of the day. Other words would be substituted for the divine name so clarity would be maintained. Thus the use of the word heaven. This is not a universal rule, since Matthew himself has at least four instances of “kingdom of God.” (There may be five, depending on how a textual variant is counted.) Even given these exceptions, the difference is striking. Another point regarding the Jewishness of Matthew’s Gospel is Jesus’ time in a wilderness, which immediately leads into today’s lesson text. The parallel is with the nation of Israel’s experience in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. The 40 years of Israel’s stay is mirrored in Jesus’ stay of 40 days (Numbers 14:33, 34; Matthew 4:2). But unlike that case, Jesus did not suffer defeat as a result (compare Numbers 14:39–45). Instead, he faced Satan’s temptations victoriously, defeating him with the faithful and proper use of Scripture three times. Today’s text comes next.

Key Verse: Matt 4:19

Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

4:1-2. After being baptized, **Jesus was led immediately by the Spirit of God into the desert** (traditionally near Jericho) for a period of testing. This period of time was a necessary period under God’s direction—a time in which the Son obeyed (Heb. 5:8). **After fasting 40 days**, when the Lord **was hungry**, the tests began. From God’s standpoint the tests demonstrated the quality of the Lord. It was impossible for the divine Son to sin, and that fact actually heightened the tests. He could not give in to the tests and sin, but He had to endure until the tests were completed.

4:3-4. The first test pertained to the matter of sonship. Satan assumed that if He were the Son, perhaps He could be persuaded to act independently of the Father. Satan’s test was subtle for since He is **the Son of God**, He has the power to turn the **stones** all around Him into **bread**. But that was not the will of His Father for Him. The Father’s will was for Him to be hungry in the desert with no food. To submit to Satan’s suggestion and satisfy His hunger would have been contrary to God’s will. Jesus therefore quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, which affirms that **man does not live on bread alone, but by God’s Word**. It is better to obey God’s Word than to satisfy human desires. The fact that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy showed that He recognized the inerrant authority of that book, one often criticized by scholars.

4:5-7. The second test by Satan appealed to personal display or popularity. This test built on the first, for if He is **the Son of God** and the Messiah, nothing could harm Him. Satan **took Him to... the highest point of the temple**. Whether this was actual or simply a vision cannot be determined dogmatically. Here Satan made a subtle suggestion to Jesus as the Messiah. In effect he was reminding Jesus of Malachi’s prophecy (Mal. 3:1), which had led to a common belief among the Jews that Messiah would suddenly appear in the

sky, coming down to His temple. Satan was saying, in essence, “Why don’t You do what the people are expecting and make some marvelous display? After all, the Scripture says **His angels** will protect You and You won’t even hurt a **foot** as You come down.” Satan may have thought if Jesus could quote Scripture to him, he could quote it too. However, he purposely did not quote Psalm 91:11-12 accurately. He left out an important phrase, “in all Your ways.” According to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord’s will. For Jesus to cast Himself **down** from the pinnacle of the temple in some dramatic display to accommodate Himself to the people’s thinking would not have been God’s will. Jesus responded, again from Deuteronomy (6:16), that it would not be proper to **test... God** and expect Him to do something when one is out of His will.

4:8-11. Satan’s final test related to God’s plan for Jesus. It was and is God’s design that Jesus Christ rule the world. Satan **showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world** with all **their splendor**. These kingdoms presently are Satan’s, as he is “the god of this Age” (2 Cor. 4:4) and “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; cf. Eph. 2:2). He had the power to **give** all these kingdoms to Jesus at that time—if only Jesus would **bow down and worship** him. Satan was saying, “I can accomplish the will of God for You and You can have the kingdoms of this world right now.” This of course would have meant Jesus would never have gone to the cross. He supposedly could have been the King of kings without the cross. However, this would have thwarted God’s plan for salvation and would have meant Jesus was worshiping an inferior. His response, once again from Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20), was that **God** alone should be worshiped and served. Jesus resisted this temptation also.

Interestingly Satan’s temptations of Eve in the Garden of Eden correspond to those of Jesus in the desert. Satan appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt. 4:3), the desire for personal gain (Gen. 3:4-5; Matt. 4:6), and an easy path to power or glory (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt. 4:8-9). And in each case Satan altered God’s Word (Gen. 3:4; Matt. 4:6). Satan’s temptations of people today often fall into the same three categories (cf. 1 John 2:16). The One who had identified Himself with sinners by baptism and who would provide righteousness proved He is righteous, and revealed His approval by the Father. Satan then **left** Jesus. At that moment God sent **angels** to minister to His needs.

4:12-16. Matthew presented an important time factor in his account when he noted **Jesus** did not officially begin His public ministry until **John** the Baptist **had been put in prison**. The reason for John’s imprisonment was not presented here, but it was stated later (14:3). When Jesus learned of John’s imprisonment, He went from **Nazareth** and settled in **Capernaum** (Luke 4:16-30 explains why He left Nazareth). This region was the area settled by the tribes of **Zebulun and Naphtali** after the conquest of Joshua’s time. **Isaiah** had prophesied (Isa. 9:1-2) that **light** would come to this region, and Matthew saw this movement of Jesus as fulfillment of this prophecy. One of Messiah’s works was to bring **light** into **darkness**, for He would be a light to both Jews and Gentiles (cf. John 1:9; 12:46).

4:17. When John was imprisoned, **Jesus began to preach**. His words had a familiar ring: **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near** (cf. 3:2). The twofold message of John was now proclaimed by the Messiah. The work of God was rapidly moving toward the establishing of the glorious kingdom of God on earth. If one wanted to be a part of the kingdom, he must repent. Repentance was mandatory if fellowship with God was to be enjoyed.

4:18-22. Since Jesus is the promised Messiah, He had the right to call men from their normal pursuits of life to **follow** Him. This was not the first time these men had met Jesus, for the Fourth Gospel relates Jesus’ first meeting with some of the disciples (John 1:35-42). Jesus now **called** these **fishermen** to leave their profession behind and to begin following Him permanently. He would take them from fishing for fish and **make** them **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. The calling carried with it a cost, for it involved leaving not only one’s profession but also one’s family responsibilities. Matthew noted that **James and John... left** not only their fishing, but also **their father** to begin following Jesus.

4:23. 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 (cf. 9:35, almost identical to 4:23). Several important elements are included in this verse. (1) **Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues**. The ministry of this One who claimed to be King of the Jews was conducted among the Jews. He ministered in synagogues, places of Jewish gatherings for worship. (2) This One was involved in “teaching” and **preaching**. He thus was involved in a prophetic ministry for He is “the Prophet” announced in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. (3) He was proclaiming **the good news 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. (4) He was **healing every disease and sickness among the people** (cf. “teaching,” “preaching,” and “healing” in Matt. 9:35). 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.

4:24-25. The ministry of Jesus—and probably also the ministry of the four men he called (vv. 18-22)—was dramatic for multitudes of people heard of Jesus and began to flock to Him. The **news about Him spread all over Syria**, the area north of Galilee. As people came, they brought many who were afflicted with a variety of illnesses and Jesus **healed them all**. No wonder **large crowds** began to follow Jesus **from Galilee**, from **the Decapolis** (lit., “10 cities”; an area east and south of the Sea of Galilee), from **Jerusalem** and **Judea**, and **the region across** (west of) **the Jordan River**.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Reasons to Follow (Matt 4:12-16)

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."

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

To fulfill the purposes and plans of God (12-15)

Because God controls the plans of the heart of man (Prov 16:1)

1 To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue.

Because God controls the success of plans (Prov 16:3)

3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Because God controls the steps of man (Prov 16:9)

9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Because God's purpose will always be done (Prov 19:21)

21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

To be a light to the world (16)

A light of the world through Jesus (John 8:12)

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

A light of trust in Jesus (John 12:35-36)

35 Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.

36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

A light of the fellowship with one another and God (1 John 1:7)

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

A light of the knowledge and glory of God (2 Cor 4:6)

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

A light because Christians are sons of the light (1 Thess 5:5)

5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

To warn of the coming of Jesus (17)

Jesus is coming back to resurrect after He prepares our places (John 14:2-3)

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Jesus is coming back to resurrect through the rapture (1 Thess 4:16-17)

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Jesus is coming back to resurrect and bring salvation (Heb 9:28)

28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Jesus is coming back to lead us to the springs of living water (Rev 7:17)

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The Results of Following (Matt 4:18-22)

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.

To disciple others (18-19)

Disciple others because Jesus commanded it (Matt 28:18-20)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Disciple others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Disciple others through teaching (2 Tim 2:2)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

To obey the call of God (20)

Obedience because it delights God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience because it leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience because it leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Obedience because it keeps us in God's love (John 15:10)

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

To help and serve others (21-22)

Serve others in love (Gal 5:13)

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Serve wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7)

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

Serve others with the gifts God has provided (1 Peter 4:10)

10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Serve others by trying to build them up (Rom 15:1-3)

1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

Serve others by carrying their burdens (Gal 6:2)

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Jesus Withdraws to Galilee (Matthew 4:12-17)

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, he went into Galilee. 13 While in Galilee, he moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled: ***“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, and on those sitting in the region and the shadow of death a light has dawned.”*** 17 From that time Jesus began to preach this message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

The casual reader would hardly realize that nearly a year has passed between Matthew 4:11 and 4:12:

Matthew passes over many things from the earlier work of Jesus in Judea and Galilee that could have been included. We are told about some of these things in John. Before returning to Galilee (which John records in 4:43), Jesus met and called the first disciples, turned the water to wine at Cana, resided for a short while in Capernaum, returned to Jerusalem for an early Passover, drove the money changers from the temple, talked to Nicodemus, conducted an early teaching ministry in the Judean countryside, and had his encounter with the woman of Samaria on his way north again (see John 1:19—4:42). It is at this point that Matthew seems to pick up the story (Matt. 4:12-25)... . In verse 11, Jesus was in the desert near the Jordan. Now Matthew says only that “when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee” (v. 12). This would have been about a year later.

While John’s Gospel finds Jesus in Jerusalem quite early (John 2:13—3:36), the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) pass by this early Jerusalem ministry and present our Lord’s ministry as commencing in Galilee. Matthew and Mark specifically indicate that Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee after the arrest of John the Baptist. The arrest of John was therefore a kind of turning point in our Lord’s ministry.

I am inclined to agree with a number of translations which indicate that Jesus “withdrew” into Galilee. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Jesus was somehow going into hiding, as if out of fear. For one thing, Herod ruled over Galilee, as well as over Judea, so Jesus was not escaping from Herod. And it should be self-evident that Jesus was not trying to remain incognito in Galilee. He traveled widely, ministered publicly, and attracted a very large following.

The mystery is why Jesus would go to Galilee in the first place. I like the way Bruner puts it:

“Therefore when Jesus ‘retreated to Galilee’ he did more than head north, he seemed to go wrong.”

As one of my friends put it, “When Jesus went north, to all appearances He had ‘gone south’” (somehow lost His bearings).

We need to remind ourselves about Galilee before we can understand why Jesus’ withdrawal to Galilee is so perplexing. Galilee was north of Judea. As partial payment for the assistance Hiram, King of Tyre, had given Solomon in the building of the temple, Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in Galilee. The interesting thing about this is Hiram’s response:

11 King Solomon gave King Hiram of Tyre twenty cities in the region of Galilee, because Hiram had supplied Solomon with cedars, evergreens, and all the gold he wanted. 12 When Hiram went out from Tyre to inspect the cities Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them (1 Kings 9:11-12).

When the United Kingdom was divided during the reign of Rehoboam, Galilee became a part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Southern Kingdom was Judah, which continued to be ruled by the descendants of David. The Northern Kingdom, under Jeroboam and subsequent ungodly kings, turned to false worship. Israel did not do much better, although some of her kings were godly men. When both kingdoms became corrupt, God began to warn of a coming day of judgment, a day when God would use the Assyrians as His instrument of judgment, carrying the people of the Northern Kingdom into captivity. The Assyrians would threaten Judah and Jerusalem but would not succeed in sacking that city:

1 The Lord told me, “Take a large tablet and inscribe these words on it with an ordinary stylus: ‘Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.’ 2 Then I will summon as my reliable witnesses Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah.” 3

I then had sexual relations with the prophetess; she conceived and gave birth to a son. The Lord told me, "Name him Maher Shalal Hash Baz, 4 for before the child knows how to cry out, 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria." 5 The Lord spoke to me again: 6 "These people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and melt in fear over Rezin and the son of Remaliah. 7 So look, the sovereign master is bringing up against them the turbulent and mighty waters of the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria and all his majestic power. It will reach flood stage and overflow its banks. 8 It will spill into Judah, flooding and engulfing, as it reaches the necks of its victims. He will spread his wings out over your entire land, O Immanuel!" (Isaiah 8:1-8).

Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, did just as God had forewarned (see 2 Kings 15:29). When the Assyrians sacked the Northern Kingdom, they carried the people to Assyria. Later, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, would once again march against Israel and would carry the Israelites into exile in Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-6). The Assyrians then brought captives from other places to live in the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17:24). As a result, the Northern Kingdom (which included Galilee) became diluted (the people of Judah would probably say polluted) ethnically and spiritually. Over time the Jewish population in the Northern Kingdom increased somewhat. Nevertheless, for the Jews of Judah and Jerusalem, Galilee was not considered a place of status. As Bruner put it,

Galilee is a strange place for a Messiah to work. There is no early rabbinic reference to the Messiah's appearing or working in Galilee. Galilee was not just geographically far from Jerusalem; it was considered spiritually and politically far, too. Galilee was the most pagan of the Jewish provinces, located as it was at the northernmost tier of Palestine. This distance from Zion was not only geographic; Galileans were considered by Judaeans to sit rather loosely to the law and to be less biblically pure than those in or near Jerusalem. Finally, Galilee was notorious for being the nest of revolution and the haunt of Zealot revolutionary movements. Just a few years before Jesus' birth, Sephoris, capital city of Galilee, had been led in revolt by Judas of Galilee against the Roman government and had brought Galilee into defeat and many of the people of God into shame.

Matthew very cryptically informs his readers that Jesus left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum "**by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali**" (Matthew 4:12). Because this was our Lord's home base, a number of miracles were performed there, including the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13), and of Simon's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-17), exorcising the man with an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-28), and the healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1-12). No wonder Jesus could say that Capernaum was worthy of greater condemnation:

23 "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades! For if the miracles done among you had been done in Sodom, it would have continued to this day. 24 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you!" (Matthew 11:23-24)

Capernaum may have its military garrison, and a tax-collector's office, where Matthew was seated (Matthew 9:1, 9), but it was hardly the kind of town one would expect the Messiah to make his headquarters:

Little is known about Capernaum, but Matthew tells us that it occupied a seaside position and that it was in the general area of Zebulun and Naphtali (These tribes are mentioned again in the New Testament only in v. 15 and Rev. 7:6-8). The name Capernaum means "Nahum's village," but this does not help us because it is not known who the Nahum in question was. It is generally accepted that the site of the city is that known as "Tell Hum" at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. It was of fair size (J. P. Kane says that its area was c. 800 by 250 m.), but it was not a great city and there are few references to it outside the Gospels. For whatever reason, Jesus made Capernaum the center of his ministry rather than his hometown; *JB*'s "settled in Capernaum" bring this out (cf. 9:1).

What is so important about Capernaum and Galilee that Matthew makes such a point of telling us about these places? Matthew wants his readers to know that Jesus' withdrawal to Galilee was no mistake; it was, in fact, the fulfillment of prophecy, another proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

1 The gloom will be dispelled for those who were anxious. In earlier times he humiliated the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali; but now he brings honor to the way of the sea, the region beyond the Jordan, and Galilee of the nations. 2 The people walking in darkness see a bright light; light shines on those who live in a land of deep darkness (Isaiah 9:1-2).

With some variations from the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, Matthew cites the first two verses of Isaiah 9. In chapter 8, Isaiah warned of the coming invasion of the Assyrians, which would sack the Northern Kingdom and threaten Judah. Now in chapter 9, Isaiah speaks of a coming day of salvation and deliverance. While the more

immediate deliverance will be a return to the land of Israel, Matthew sees the ultimate deliverance in the coming of Messiah. It is Matthew alone who points to our Lord's withdrawal into Galilee as the fulfillment of prophecy. It is noteworthy, as R.V.G. Tasker points out that,

The expressions *by the way of the sea* (i.e. towards the Mediterranean) and *beyond Jordan* (i.e. west of Jordan) depict the district from the viewpoint of the Assyrian invaders.

As the Assyrians (followed by the Babylonians) made their destructive assault on the Northern Kingdom, as they made their way toward Judah, so Jesus made His saving assault first in Galilee, and then later in Judah. Matthew's reference to Isaiah 9 indicates that it was his belief that the prophet Isaiah foretold (perhaps unwittingly) the geographical sequence of our Lord's coming to save His people.

Jesus Calls Four of His Disciples (Matthew 4:18-22)

18 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon (called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). 19 He said to them, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people." 20 They left their nets immediately and followed him. 21 Going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. Then he called them. 22 They immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

Every student of the New Testament recognizes that there are several "callings" of the disciples. These take place over a period of time. The initial calling is to be found in John 1:

35 Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. 36 Gazing at Jesus as he walked by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" 37 When his two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned around and saw them following and said to them, "What do you want?" So they said to him, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 Jesus answered, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. Now it was about four o'clock in the afternoon. 40 Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus. 41 He found first his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" (which is translated Christ). 42 Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). 43 On the next day Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.) 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and exclaimed, "Look, a true Israelite *in whom there is no deceit!*" 48 Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus replied, "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 said to him, "Because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth—you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

It seems that shortly after our Lord's baptism by John two of his disciples (one of whom we know was Andrew – see verse 40) left John to follow Jesus. These two followed Jesus that day (verse 39). Andrew then recruited his brother Peter. Philip was added as well, and he recruited Nathanael. The calling that Matthew describes in 4:18-22 is a later one, perhaps associated with the calling in Luke 5:1-11. Matthew's calling involves only four disciples, two sets of brothers: Simon and Andrew (Matthew 4:18-20), and James and John (4:21-22). The account of Matthew's will not be recorded until Matthew 9:9.

It seems that this calling of the disciples is a permanent one. This time these disciples leave their fishing business to accompany Jesus full time. Several factors point us in this direction. First, from Matthew's point of view, this is the commencement of Jesus' public ministry. What better time for the disciples to follow Jesus full time? Second, both sets of brothers are said to have "**left their nets.**" Matthew tells us that James and John also left "**the boat**" and their father (4:22). Third, Jesus' words, "**Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people**" (Matthew 4:19) would seem to indicate a change of profession. While these disciples have left their fishing business before, this seems to be a more permanent departure, and thus a major turning point in their lives.

Matthew's use of the word "**immediately,**" should not be overlooked. He tells us that immediately after these four men were called to follow Jesus, they left their nets and joined Him. I realize that while this is not the first time these men have been called, it is the first time they have been called to follow Jesus permanently. When

called by Jesus, they responded immediately. I believe this is recorded to inform the reader that Jesus was a man of authority. Not only did He teach with authority (Matthew 7:28-29), He called with authority. When Jesus spoke, His sheep responded (see John 10:27-29).

Normally, disciples chose their master, but here it was Jesus who chose His disciples. He did not choose men who could put up a good fight (though Peter was willing to give it a try); He called men who would learn what He had to teach them about the kingdom of heaven. This is surely a clue to the kind of ministry our Lord came to carry out. He selected those whom He would empower and leave behind to proclaim the message of the Gospel. And in the end, He would instruct these men to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20). The coming of His kingdom was not immediate, but would come over some period of time.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/8-commencement-jesus-ministry-matthew-412-25>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When Jesus invited Peter, Andrew, James, and John to join his ministry, he was inviting men who knew the importance of both the boat-time activity of casting nets (Matthew 4:18) and the dock-time activity of preparing those nets to be cast (4:21). Effective ministry today must recognize the same distinction. What Christians see and hear in half-hour sermons is boat time, when their minister is casting a net. Undergirding that boat time is (or should be) a lot of dock time—time spent preparing. Sermons that lack adequate dock time of preparation will be ineffective. We can expand this analogy to the life of any Christian. When the opportunity to speak a word for Jesus presents itself, will we have put in the necessary dock time so that word will be persuasive (see 1 Peter 3:15)? The analogy applies also to vocation changes. Would you consider leaving one career for another in order to follow Jesus more closely? Or will you hurriedly think I have to provide for my family, or I'm worse than an unbeliever! to dismiss such a possibility immediately (1 Timothy 5:8). Consider how today's world might look if the four disciples of today's lesson had said no. They received no assurance that their families would be adequately provided for, but they had no higher priority than Jesus' call on their lives (compare Matthew 19:27; Luke 5:28; 9:59–62). What about you?

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Jesus Moved to Capernaum - John the Baptist spoke boldly against King Herod and his wife Herodias concerning their immoral marriage. After John's rebuke landed him in prison, Jesus left Nazareth, His hometown, and moved to Capernaum, which became His ministry base. Historically in this region of Israel, the northern tribes suffered greatly, especially during the time of the Assyrians, when the Israelites were carried into captivity. Jesus brought the light of the Good News to Capernaum and the lakeshore towns on the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus Fulfilled Previous Predictions - The Gospel of Matthew views Jesus' move to Capernaum as a fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 4:12-16; Isa. 9:1-2). Throughout Matthew's Gospel are Old Testament passages about the coming Messiah that Jesus fulfilled. Matthew wanted to help his Jewish brothers and sisters understand the prophecies and acknowledge Jesus as the anticipated Messiah.

Jesus Preached Repentance - Jesus preached in Capernaum bringing the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus repeated John the Baptist's words to His audience, calling for people's repentance. The term means to feel deep remorse over one's past way of living. A repentant person realizes how he or she has sinned toward God and asks for the Lord's power to make a change, continually turning to the Father for help, turning away from the offensive behavior.

Jesus Selected Disciples - While preaching in this area, Jesus also chose several men to become His disciples. Jewish rabbis had disciples who traveled around with them, learning their words and ways. So, as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He challenged two sets of brothers working as fishermen to come and follow Him. Peter and Andrew, and James and John the sons of Zebedee, left their fishing careers behind and answered Jesus' challenge to help spread His message to the multitudes.

Christians Bring Jesus' Light to the World - Jesus brought His light to the world, helping us find the way back to the true and living God. Now, He wants this message to be shared with the entire world. Christians are called to continue to take His words of salvation to the spiritually lost and confused, who live dark, empty lives. God's children are now His light.