

A gap of almost one year, labeled by some as the “Year of Inauguration” occurs between the temptations of Christ identified in Matthew 4:1-11 and Matthew 4:12. Most of this time period is not detailed in any of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) but only in the Gospel of John. In fact, portions of the 8th, 9th, and 12th chapters of Matthew appear to have occurred before all the events of this chapter and the Sermon on the Mount in Chapters 5-7. While it may not make sense to us, the gospels do not all record events in a chronological order. Matthew is one such gospel, sometimes progressing in a thematic order. To get a sense of the chronology of events examine the timeline and passages below. This timeline is taken from, “A Harmony of the Gospels” by A.T. Robertson.

Chronology of events between the Temptation of Christ and the Sermon on the Mount:

- John’s testimony to the Sanhedrin (John 1:19-28)
- John’s identification of Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:29-34)
- Jesus Makes His First Disciples (John 1:35-51)
- Jesus turns water to wine in Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11)
- Jesus visits Capernaum the first time (John 2:12)
- Jesus cleanses the temple the first time (John 2:13-22)
- Jesus speaks to Nicodemus (John 2:23-3:21)
- The Parallel ministries of Jesus and John (John 3:22-4:4)
- Herod imprisons John the Baptist (Luke 3:19-20)
- **Jesus begins move to Galilee (MATTHEW 4:12)**
- Jesus meets the woman at the well in Samaria and preaches there (John 4:5-42)
- Jesus arrives in Galilee (John 4:43-45)
- **Jesus begins to preach (MATTHEW 4:17)**
- Jesus heals the Cana nobleman’s son (John 4:46-54)
- Jesus speaks at Nazareth synagogue and is rejected there (Luke 4:16-31)
- **Jesus moves to Capernaum (MATTHEW 4:13-16)**
- **Jesus calls Peter, James, John, and Andrew as disciples (MATTHEW 4:18-22)**
- Jesus casts out a demon at the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-28)
- Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law and many others (MATTHEW 8:14-17)
- **Jesus preaches throughout Galilee with the Four Fishermen (MATTHEW 4:23-25)**
- Jesus heals a leper (MATTHEW 8:2-4)
- Jesus heals the man lowered down through the rooftop (MATTHEW 9:1-8)
- Jesus calls Matthew (MATTHEW 9:9-13)
- Jesus defends His disciples for feasting instead of fasting (MATTHEW 9:14-17)
- Jesus heals a lame man on the Sabbath in Jerusalem (John 5:1-47)
- Jesus deals with a 2nd Sabbath controversy (MATTHEW 12:1-8)
- Jesus deals with a 3rd Sabbath controversy after healing a man’s hand (MATTHEW 12:9-14)
- Jesus teaches and heals great multitudes by the Sea of Galilee (Mark 3:7-12)
- Jesus prays all night and selects the 12 Apostles (Mark 3:13-19)
- Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount (MATTHEW 5-7)

Moving to Capernaum (4:12-17)

As we read in the passages above, Jesus traveled back and forth between Judea and Galilee after His return from the wilderness temptations, teaching, doing miracles, and gathering disciples. This specific move into Galilee from Judea was triggered by the arrest of John the Baptist. Why would this have influenced Jesus to go to Galilee? See John 7:1-10.

The action taken by Herod against John might have emboldened the Jewish establishment who did not like John, or the budding ministry of Jesus. At the heart of their disdain was jealousy fueled by the attention and respect given to John and Jesus and the words they spoke. It was not yet Jesus' time to give His life. He was willing at the appointed time, but not until that time.

Upon coming to Galilee, Jesus first went to His hometown of Nazareth; but He soon moved out of Nazareth and settled in the city of Capernaum. Why did Jesus leave Nazareth? Read Luke 4:28-30.

His ministry was not accepted in Nazareth because of their familiarity with Him. In fact, they were offended by His preaching and tried to cast Him off of a cliff and stone Him before He escaped.

CAPERNAUM

"Nahum's town, a Galilean city frequently mentioned in the history of our Lord. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament. After our Lord's expulsion from Nazareth, Capernaum became his "own city." It was the scene of many acts and incidents of his life... It stood on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The

"land of Gennesaret," near, if not in, which it was situated, was one of the most prosperous and crowded districts of Palestine. This city lay on the great highway from Damascus to Acco and Tyre. It has been identified with Tell Hum, about two miles south-west of where the Jordan flows into the lake. Here are extensive ruins of walls and foundations, and also the remains of what must have been a beautiful synagogue, which it is conjectured may have been the one built by the centurion (Lu 7:5), in which our Lord frequently taught (Joh 6:59; Mr 1:21; Lu 4:33). Others have conjectured that the ruins of the city are to be found at Khan Minyeh, some three miles further to the south on the shore of the lake."

- Easton's Bible Dictionary

The Lord's rejection in Nazareth and move to Capernaum was not unanticipated, but was actually prophesied in Old Testament. Matthew references a passage from Isaiah that foretold of the coming of a great light to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali.

PROPHECY

"Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." – Isaiah 9:1-2

The Gospel of Matthew

MINISTRY BEGINS (4:12 – 4:25)

The map on the right shows an overlay of the believed boundaries of the 12 tribes of Israel and the approximate locations of Nazareth and Capernaum during New Testament times. Nazareth was in the territory previously held by Zebulun and Capernaum was in the territory previously held by Naphtali. This was all within the territory called Galilee in the New Testament.

We read some other passages from Isaiah 7 and 8 as we studied the end of Matthew 1. Isaiah was prophesying of

coming destruction upon Israel because of her sins against the Lord, but also prophesying of One who would be born of a virgin and named Immanuel. The prophecy just quoted from Isaiah 9 is a continuation of this thought. Read Isaiah 9:1-7. What is the darkness and light spoken of in verse two?

The darkness is the darkness of sin. The light is the light of God's truth and salvation. The light would be borne by the "light of the world", Jesus Christ. He is the light.

What was it that would make Zebulun and Naphtali glorious? Compare this with the statements made concerning the first and second temples in Ezra 3:10-13 and Haggai 2:1-9.

The revelation and ministry of Jesus Christ would make the Zebulun and Naphtali glorious just as He would make the second temple more glorious than the first. The glory was measured by the revelation and presence of God. Silver, gold, and size mean nothing when compared with the glory of Christ.

In comparison to Judea, Galilee was a much more cosmopolitan and worldly area. Capernaum was located on an important trade route to the Mediterranean Sea and therefore was under a lot of worldly influences. Judea was considered more "morally pure" than Galilee. The Galileans were more unorthodox (in a Jewish sense) in their manner of life. Thus, when Nicodemus argued for Jesus to be treated fairly by the Jewish Sanhedrin, he was told, "...Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John 7:52). Unfortunately, they forgot about this passage from Isaiah 9. Why might the Lord choose to reside in Galilee rather than Judea? Read Luke 5:31-32.

The people of Galilee would more quickly recognize their need for a Savior and heed the message of Jesus. They would also possess a more flexible nature that would allow them to adapt and adopt the teachings of Jesus more readily. His message was one that greatly challenged the Jewish establishment and would prove to be difficult for them to embrace.



The Gospel of Matthew

MINISTRY BEGINS (4:12 – 4:25)

As we have noted, this was a time of significant transition for Jesus. John the Baptist was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Jesus moved up to Galilee to continue His ministry and then He was rejected in Nazareth and relocated to Capernaum. It was at this time that Jesus began to preach, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Where have we heard this message before and what is significant about the timing of Jesus’ preaching? Read Luke 24:45-47 and Acts 17:30.

This is the backbone of the gospel message. The Lord sent John the Baptist as the bookend of the Old Testament after 400 years of silence. Yet, from the days of John the Baptist to this day, the world has not been without a herald proclaiming this message of hope to lost humanity. As John finished off the Old Testament, Jesus brought in the New with His preaching.

What does it mean to “preach” and how should the meaning of this word guide us today?

To preach means to herald, proclaim, or publish. John MacArthur says, “Preaching is the proclamation of certainties, not the suggestion of possibilities”. It is an authoritative message based on an authoritative source. While we most commonly think of preaching as a verbal discourse done from a pulpit, the word has a much broader context and we would do well to make use of the fullness of the definition. Some of the greatest and most enduring preaching has been written down on paper and heard by generations of men. Many of the greatest sermons were preached outside the walls of a church building. Our goal is to get the message out using whatever means the Lord provides.

Calling Disciples (4:18-22)

This was not Jesus’ first time to run into Peter and Andrew. Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptist and when John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God, Andrew immediately went to get his brother, Simon (Peter) and they began to follow Jesus. See John 1:35-42 for more details. This incident in John took place fairly early during the first year of Jesus’ ministry. What we are reading in Matthew took place towards the beginning of Jesus’ second year of ministry. When we put these accounts together we see a fuller picture of what Jesus was doing in their lives. They apparently had followed Christ to some degree since He began His public ministry, but had not wholly left all to follow Him. This event in Matthew is the formal calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John to the service of Christ and it is told in more detail in Luke. Read Luke 5:1-11 and answer the following questions.

What is significant about Jesus initiating the interaction with the disciples? Read John 15:16 and 1 Corinthians 12:11. We don’t come to God by ourselves, He comes to us. This is the way it is in salvation and the way it is in our calling and ministry as well. In this case, He called the disciples to be “fishers of men”. This isn’t an office they took upon themselves, but one they were called to.

What was Peter’s response to the miracle Jesus performed? What did this experience mean to him? Read Isaiah 6:1-8. Is there a similarity between the call of Isaiah and Peter? Peter’s response was to declare himself a sinful man and ask the Lord to depart because he was unworthy of His presence and His calling. To Peter, this was more than just an abundance of fish, but an expression of love from God directed personally to him. God knows just how to reach each of us. This is very similar to Isaiah’s experience when he saw the Lord in his vision.

The Gospel of Matthew

MINISTRY BEGINS (4:12 – 4:25)

What did Jesus prove to the disciples by catching the draught of fish? He proved that He could provide for their needs if they would leave all to follow Him. He also demonstrated His divine power and wisdom. What He brings us to, He will bring us through.

Do you believe this experience with Jesus was needed for them to be willing to leave all and follow Him? We can boast of our faith, but our faith is based on our experiences with God and our trust in His Word. As He makes Himself real to us, we are able to grasp Him by faith and continue on past our line of sight. Jesus didn't do anything by accident and this event was designed for both the disciples and all of those who needed to read this in the coming ages. I believe it was what the disciples needed to leave all and follow Him and He was willing to provide it.

What can we learn from the way Jesus communicated with the disciples and the miracle He performed for them? Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Jesus knows just how to communicate with each one of us. To a fisherman who appreciated the amount of toil involved in catching fish, this miracle was especially relevant. It spoke directly to his heart. He ate with sinners, met the woman caught in adultery on her execution site, talked to the woman at the well about living water, spoke parables of farming and investing, and even hung by a thief on the cross. He was truly all things to all men. We need to learn from this and not require men to learn our language and customs before we share the truth with them.

As recorded in Matthew, Jesus made an agreement with the disciples. What did each party promise? Jesus told them to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men. He promised to transform them into a vessel that would win souls to God. They had to be willing to leave all to follow Him. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, all the apostles kept their promise by the grace of God and He used them as a foundation for the greatest evangelistic institution in the world, His church.

Is Jesus willing to make a similar agreement with Christians today? Read Matthew 16:25 and John 14:16-26. Yes, He has just as much purpose for us as He did for the apostles. When we see His love and care for them, we need to realize that He loves us just as much. He has left His Spirit for the express purpose of leading us and guiding us into that purpose, making us suitable to His use. Just as Jesus began the work of making the disciples "fishers of men", the Spirit completed the work and does the work in us today.

What is the price of this agreement for us? Read Romans 12:1-2 and Galatians 5:24-25. We must be willing to offer up our lives as a living sacrifice to Him. As we empty ourselves of the flesh, we can be filled with the Spirit. We too must take up our cross and follow Him.

The Galilean Ministry (4:23-25)

The Lord God led Jesus to Galilee to begin publishing His gospel. As we learn later in the New Testament, the miracles were designed to establish the message (see Acts 2:22). Nicodemus rightly said in John 3:2, "... no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

The Gospel of Matthew

MINISTRY BEGINS (4:12 – 4:25)

It is no accident that as Jesus began to proclaim the gospel that the Spirit also worked to authenticate His message to those who heard by performing miracles among them. As we read verses 23 and 24, what emphasis did Matthew make about Jesus' healing ministry?

Jesus healed every kind of disease, sickness, pain, paralytic, epileptics (lunatics), and even those who were demon possessed. Nothing was outside of His capacity and capability. Everyone who was brought to Jesus was healed. No one was turned away.

How do we carry this principle forward today?

There is nothing impossible with God. We can still go to this Jesus and He can still heal all manner of diseases if it is His will. His power goes beyond diseases though to every spiritual malady known to fallen man. Nothing is outside the grasp of His power.

Look at the map I handed out early in this series. Is there a geographical significance of the areas that thronged to Jesus during His teaching ministry?

The Scripture says that the areas of Decapolis, Judea, Galilee, Syria and beyond the Jordan came to hear Jesus. This is much of the area that was within the boundaries of Israel during its time as a nation.