

conscience is violated, since they had doubts. Thus, they are condemned for sinning against their conscience and it is our fault! (Cf. Mt. 18:1-14; Ro. 14:1—15:7; I Co. 8; 10:23-33) We are, with every one of our fellow men, waging this warfare against Satan, so let us not be their devil to tempt them by what we do (cf. Mt. 16:23) but, rather, let us provoke them to love, faith and good works! (Heb. 10:23-25)

Section 8

JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE

(Parallels: Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:14—5:1; John 4:1-45)

TEXT: 4:12-17

12. Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee;
13. and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali:
14. that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying,
15. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, Toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
16. The people that sat in darkness saw a great light,
And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death,
To them did light spring up.
17. From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What influence does human activity or human weakness have upon the plan of God, as realized in the ministry of Jesus? (Cf. Mt. 4:12; 8:34; 13:58; Mk. 1:45)
- b. Why do you suppose Jesus left Nazareth and dwelt in Capernaum at this time? Why should He choose to leave His own hometown?
- c. In what sense is the ministry of Jesus to this area the bringing of "light" to them? How were they "sitting in darkness"?
- d. What is the essence of the kingdom of God?
- e. What does Jesus mean by "repent"?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Now after John was arrested and imprisoned by Herod, the report of the incident reached the ears of Jesus. Another factor enters to account for what follows: when the Lord knew that the Pharisees were aware of His ministry and that He was making and His disciples were baptizing more followers than John, Jesus left Judea. He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Jesus decided that He had to pass through Samaria. Coming to Sychar, He declared Himself to be Messiah to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. She, in turn, called the attention of the entire city to Him. That two-day revival in Samaria caused many Samaritans to conclude that Jesus was indeed the Savior of the world. (Jn. 4:5-42)

After the two days, Jesus departed for Galilee. At this point, He Himself testified that a prophet is not appreciated by His own people. But when He came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him, for they had seen all that Jesus had done in Jerusalem at the feast, since they too were there. Jesus' reputation spread through all the surrounding country. He taught in their synagogues to the great admiration of everyone.

Next, Jesus came again to Cana in Galilee where He healed the son of a Capernaum nobleman by "remote control." (Jn. 4:46-54)

From Cana He went to Nazareth where He had been brought up. On the sabbath, He went into the synagogue, as was His practice. There He read Isaiah 61:1, 2 and preached a sermon on that text, that got Him thrown out of the synagogue and of Nazareth. (Lk. 4:16-30)

Leaving Nazareth, Jesus settled down at Capernaum, a lakeside town located on the northwestern shore of Lake Galilee in the ancient territorial divisions of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Jesus' move to Capernaum resulted in the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1, 2, which reads thus:

Land of Zebulun and Land of Naphtali,
 The Land of the Road by the Sea, and beyond the Jordan,
 With Galilee of the Gentiles—
 The people that were living in darkness
 Have seen a great Light,
 And, for those who were living in the land of the shadow of death,
 A Light has dawned.

It was from this period that Jesus began to proclaim the message of God's good news, saying, "This is the time; the kingdom of God is almost upon us! You must repent and believe the good news!"

NOTES

I. GOD'S GRACE GIVEN TO GALILEE

Upon first reading of Matthew 4:11, 12, the distinct impression is received that Jesus' withdrawal into Galilee follows hard upon His victory over the tempter in the wilderness. However, let it be remembered that Matthew does not pretend precise chronological order for his narration, and it will not be surprising to learn that the following succession of events carries the full story:

1. Ministry of John the Baptist: Mt. 3:1-12; Mk. 1:2-8; Lk. 3:1-18; Jn. 1
2. Baptism of Jesus: Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-23
3. Temptation of Jesus: Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12, 13; Lk. 4:1-13
4. First Acquaintance with early disciples at Jordan: Jn. 1:35-51
5. Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee: Jn. 2:1-11
6. Change of Residence to Capernaum: Jn. 2:12
7. Cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem at Passover: Jn. 2:13-22
8. Early Judean Ministry—miracles, teaching, baptizing: Jn. 3:22, 4:1, 2
9. Teaching Nicodemus in Judea: Jn. 3:1-21
10. Arrest of John the Baptist: Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14a; Lk. 3:19, 20
11. Departure for Galilee through Samaria 8 or 9 months later: Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14a; Lk. 4:14a; Jn. 4:3, 4
12. Samaritan Woman and Samaritan Revival: Jn. 4:5-43
13. Beginning of Galilean Campaign: Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14a; Lk. 4:14, 15; Jn. 4:44, 45
14. Nobleman's Son of Capernaum healed, Jesus at Cana: Jn. 4:46-54
15. First Rejection at Nazareth: Lk. 4:16-30
16. Return to Capernaum: Mt. 4:13-17; Mk. 1:14, 15; Lk. 4:31
17. Call of Four Fishermen: Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11

With this chronologically harmonized outline for comparison of the Gospel accounts, it becomes much more comprehensible why Jesus should decide to withdraw into Galilee at this time.

John the Baptist had unmasked the Pharisees and Sadducees for the hypocrites they really were. His popular appeal galled them at first, then, alarmed them. Then came this Jesus of Nazareth into their stronghold, the temple, challenging their position. He drove out of the temple courts their profitable sources of revenue and He openly questioned their righteousness. Besides these attacks, He wrought many miracles in the Jerusalem area (Jn. 2:23; 3:2), and began gathering such a following (Jn. 2:23) that the more intimate disciples of John began to fear for their master's waning glory in the light of the ascendent popularity of Jesus (Jn. 3:26). What the hierarchy had perhaps secretly hoped would be a temporary manifestation of religious fervor is no longer to be regarded with disdain but genuine alarm. The movement seems to be growing to revolutionary proportions: Judea is excited.

At just this moment in the tension-charged atmosphere of Judea, one of John's sermons struck home to the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, Herod Antipas. John openly rebuked this petty king's flagrant immorality and gross violation of God's laws. (Cf. Mt. 14:3-5; Mk. 6:17-20; Lk. 3:19, 20) Herod could not tolerate this accusing finger pointed at his sins, nor could he permit this ground-swell of public sentiment to rise into a crescendo of national revolution (Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII, 5, 2). Perhaps John was handed over to Herod ("delivered up," see *paradidomi* in 4:12; Mk. 1:14a) by the Pharisees themselves. (Cf. Mt. 17:12; Jn. 4:1). At this crisis, i.e. **when Jesus heard that John was delivered up**, He made His move north.

He withdrew from what or whom? *Anachôreō* may be translated "go away, return, withdraw, retire, take refuge" (Arndt-Gingrich). If Jesus is seeking to avoid some impending danger, what is it? Certainly, Jesus could not hope for escape from a similar fate as that of John by His deliberate entrance into the political jurisdiction of Herod Antipas himself. Apparently, Herod's informants had not yet singled out Jesus as the new Leader of the growing reform movement, or else, Jesus had not yet launched the same condemnation as had John, and thus would not have been noticed and apprehended. Jesus could foresee those who would be His real enemies and so chose not to bring matters to a show-down at this time, for such a crisis could only end in a premature cross. Thus, rather than seek at once

the fullest notariety in the heart of Jewish world and provoke thereby the wrath of the religious hierarchy at Jerusalem (Jn. 4:1-3), Jesus chose the out-district of Galilee as the training and testing ground for those disciples who would establish the Church. He must yet train them in evangelism. Their false concepts of the Messiah and God's Kingdom must be corrected. The crisis of the cross must indeed come, but not yet. He must preach to the rest of the nation first. Thus, Jesus left Judea for several reasons:

1. John was imprisoned and Jesus wanted to maintain the momentum of John's labor and gather around Him John's lost, leaderless disciples.
2. The growing anxiety of the Pharisees needed to be cooled.
3. He already had a large following in Galilee (Jn. 2:23; 4:45).

Therefore, Jesus took the shortest, quickest route to Galilee, spending only two days in Samaria (Jn. 4:4, 40, 43).

Jesus came to Galilee: what genius! Though Galilee was not large, it had been uniquely prepared for His arrival. Galilee is that territory located in northern Palestine, bordered on the north by the heathen Syrians and Phoenicians; on the west by the plain of Accho and Mount Carmel; on the south by the half-breed Samaritans; and on the east by the Jordan River and Lake Galilee. The land area thus circumscribed was approximately that of modern Israel, north of Mount Carmel: about 60 miles long by 40 miles wide. Josephus (*Wars*, III, 3, 3) describes Jesus' countrymen thus:

The Galileans are inured to war from their infancy, and have always been very numerous; nor hath the country ever been destitute of men of courage, nor wanted a numerous set of them. Their soil is uniformly rich and fruitful and full of plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness: accordingly it is cultivated by its inhabitants and no part of it lies idle. Moreover, the cities lie here very thick, and the very many villages there are here are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants.

Jesus' tactical genius is seen in His choice of Galilee. Galilee's geographic and social relations as well as its religious history rendered

it particularly open to the reception of new ideas. The Galileans, because of their constant contact with the "outside world" of Rome, Syria, Phoenicia, could not be expected to be such sticklers for traditional orthodoxy as the Judeans. These inborn characteristics of the Galileans created particularly fertile soil for the new message of Jesus.

Jesus came to Galilee: what mercy and grace! He chose to labor among these despised Galileans of mixed ancestry, corrupted from purer Judaism by the liberalizing habits of surrounding heathenism. Before Jesus arrived, life seemed to be dominated by evil. Men existed without genuine hope or exalted purposes. All of religion seemed to be solely the possession of a few Judean Pharisees. But Jesus' entrance into Galilee shouts the joyful news to the mixed fragments of ancient Israel: "God's Kingdom is almost upon you! Evil is not the ultimate force in the universe; despair is not the final meaning to life; nor is death the last word!" Thus, God's grace was extended even to Galilee.

4:13 and leaving Nazareth. Though *kataleipo* ("leave") may be neutral, meaning simply a "departure from a place," yet it has the predominant flavor of leaving behind something or someone (Arndt-Gingrich). Had Matthew intended merely "departure," he had a wealth of words to say so (*aperchomai, metairô, apbiêmi, poreuomai, anachôreô, chôrizo, exeimi, chôreô, or metabaino*). *Jesus left Nazareth behind.* Although the words *Nazareth* and *Capernaum* are obviously geographical place names, yet Jesus' move is not without symbolical significance, and, considered the complete story of this move, these names suggest also the people who dwelt there. While Matthew does not spell out the reason for this seemingly normal change of residence to Capernaum (*katoikeô*), Luke tells the story behind it (Lk. 4:16-30). *Jesus left Nazareth*, thus, is no empty phrase, for He had faced the hard reality that a "prophet is not without honor except in His own country," (Lk. 4:24). Nevertheless, He had endeavored to speak to His own townspeople, but the more He revealed of His true identity, the more difficult they found it to believe Him. He did return later for one last time to try again to convince Nazareth, but she thought she knew too much to believe His claims (Mt. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6). But, He must leave behind His hometown for now. This is another early intimation of the tragedy that will culminate

in Calvary. It was at Nazareth of Galilee that the Light had shined in the darkness, but the darkness could neither master it by comprehending, learning or understanding it, nor seize it with hostile intent to destroy it. (Jn. 1:9f) **He came and dwelt in Capernaum.** Even if Nazareth rejected her great opportunity to enjoy the great Light come to her and was content to sit in her darkness, yet other cities would receive the Light. The loss of Nazareth meant the gain of Capernaum. Jesus had already moved from Nazareth to Capernaum earlier (Jn. 2:12), but now He makes the latter city His headquarters for the Galilean campaign. That earlier move to Capernaum suggests that Jesus had already foreseen the Nazareth rejection and had already planned His ministry in Galilee long before going south to Judea for the Passover (Jn. 2:12, 13). Then the events in Judea merely triggered His plan.

Capernaum which is by the Sea. The ruins of Tell Hum, now generally identified as the site of Capernaum, lie on the north shore of the Lake. **Borders of Zebulun and Naphtali:** Capernaum actually lay in the ancient tribal territory of Naphtali (Josh. 19:32f), and near that of Zebulun (Josh. 19:10f); however, these old boundary lines had long ceased to divide the territories. Matthew uses these lines to draw attention to the prophecy which finds fulfillment in this zone which roughly corresponds to Galilee. (Study the following passages to appreciate the intimacy of Jesus' connection with Capernaum, that date from this move: Mt. 8:5; 11:23; 17:24; Mk. 1:21; 2:1; 9:33; Lk. 4:23, 31; 7:1; 10:15; Jn. 4:46; 6:17, 24, 59.)

II. GLADDENING GLORY GRANTED TO THOSE GROPING IN GLOOM

4:14 **that it might be fulfilled.** Jesus' beginning to evangelize Galilee was not with the malicious intent to produce a mechanical correspondence between His actions and the glorious prophetic predictions concerning the age of the Messiah. Jesus came north, not to fulfill messianic prophecy, but to save people. His move was prompted by loving mercy, by personal familiarity with Galilee and its people, and by events in Judea. As a result of His transfer to Galilee, the great messianic prediction of Isaiah 9:1-7 was fulfilled. Jesus, the "Light of the world" (Jn. 1:9; 8:12) completely fulfilled the prophecy as no prophet either before or after Him could have done. (Cf. Jn. 7:52 and Lk. 1:78, 79).

Isaiah's intention was to present a well-grounded hope to these provinces of Israel that, because of their geographical position as buffer-states, had suffered the greatest affliction and spiritual degradation. This people had suffered because of their false religious orientation begun when Jeroboam caused Israel to sin, because they corrupted themselves by imitation of the practices of their more "civilized" neighbors, because they trusted false gods and the false hopes these latter could offer, and because no complete return to whole-hearted worship of the true God, Jehovah, ever came about. Add to this religious tragedy the constant unrest that accompanies almost incessant war with the Syrians and the Assyrians. To this situation Isaiah addressed these words of hope. The geographic terms:

1. **The land of Zebulun and Naphtali:** see above on 4:13.
2. **Toward the sea:** (*hodon thalassês*) may be translated, following a Hebrew idiom contrary to Greek usage, "toward the sea" (Arndt-Gingrich). Literally, it is "the road by the sea" (Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, I, 244), and speaks of that tract of land on the western shore of the Galilean Lake.
3. **Beyond the Jordan:** Perea, as viewed from the west side of Jordan.
4. **Galilee of the Gentiles:** see above on 4:12.

In Jewish thinking, the only fitting place for the beginning of the glorious reign would be Judea with His capital at Jerusalem. The concept of a Galilean Messiah was to them a self-contradiction. (See Jn. 7:52. P 66 has the article "the," thus making reference to "the prophet" i.e. "the Messiah".) Galilee was the last place on earth a Jew of that period would choose for a similar purpose. The whole area was, according to the opinion of "enlightened Jerusalem," quite "in the dark" intellectually, morally and culturally. This latter was a position based upon quite unjustified personal pride on the part of the Judeans, whereas the language of Isaiah truly describes the actual position of the Galileans: *they sat in darkness and in the region and shadow of death*. The context of Isaiah (5:30; 8:21, 22) proves that this sad plight was self-inflicted, indicating the greater need for light. To Jesus, these were just good reasons why He should labor in Galilee!

While this passage is a graphic description of the conditions among the Galileans, it may also describe all men who try to live

without God. Compare Paul's masterful analyses: Ro. 1:18-32; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19.

Other passages which develop the theme of light and darkness:

Mt. 5:14-16; 6:23; Lk. 2:32; 8:16; 11:34-36; Jn. 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9, 10; 12:35, 36, 46; Ac. 26:18, 23; Ro. 2:19; II Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:8, 13; I Th. 5:5; I Tim. 6:16; Jas. 1:17; I Pet. 2:9; I Jn. 1:5, 7; 2:8-10; Rev. 22:5.

III. THE GIST AND GENIUS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

4:17 **From that time** is to be taken with reference to Jesus' return to Galilee. Jesus now begins the thorough evangelization of Galilee. Matthew cannot mean that He is beginning for the first time to preach anywhere, for Jesus is just returning from Judea where He taught and wrought miracles (Jn. 2:13—4:3). Likewise, He passed through Samaria (Jn. 4:4-45) where He openly declared Himself to be the Messiah as well as where He accepted the open appraisal of His teaching as those of "the Savior of the world" (Jn. 4:42). Rather, Matthew intends only what he states; that when Jesus withdrew into Galilee, from that time He began to preach in Galilee. Prior to this time Jesus had not evangelized there; now He launches His "Great Galilean Campaign." Jesus' fame as a preacher dates from this campaign (Ac. 10:37), and His complete identification with Galilee from this move (cf. Lk. 23:5-7; Jn. 7:41, 52).

Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is certainly Matthew's summary statement that boils down into a very few words hours of preaching and teaching done in Galilee. Yet, Matthew has not omitted anything essential:

1. With reference to God Himself, the GIST of His Government is His unquestionable right to command repentance of sinful rebels. Objectively, the gist of His government, or kingdom, is the inclination of men's repentant hearts to do His will. (See on 3:15)
2. The GENIUS of God's Kingdom that corrects all the failures of every human reign is the fact that it begins with the willing choice of the subject to be entirely transformed by His King. In God's Kingdom there must be no unwilling subjects.

Upon the imprisonment of John, Jesus sounds the same challenge and call to repentance that had been the heart of the Baptist's message (Mt. 3:2). Jesus does this partly to maintain the continuity of the movement which John had started, but not only so, for such a call for surrender to God's will is ever timely. To this well-known message Jesus adds a joyful, gladdening ring: "The messianic times are here! Repent and believe the good news!" (Mk. 1:15) Is it any wonder that the attention of all Galilee was riveted upon this Jesus of Nazareth? The ancient prophecies describing the nature of the messianic kingdom had kept the kingdom-idea before the people of Israel. John the Baptist had electrified the nation by announcing the nearness of this long-awaited era. Jesus took up the same cry, and, profiting from the keen current interest in the kingdom, successfully launched His great preaching ministry in Galilee.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. List all of the events that occur between Jesus' temptations and His return to Galilee upon His hearing of the imprisonment of John. In other words, what happened between verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 4?
2. Does Matthew say that Jesus' return to Galilee immediately followed His temptation?
3. What are the two major causes for Jesus' sudden move to Galilee?
4. Where had Jesus been when "He withdrew into Galilee"?
5. What had He been doing there?
6. About how long had He been gone from Galilee?
7. Describe Galilee: its geographical position, size, sociological character, its probable religious preparation for Jesus' message.
8. What factors probably caused Jesus' transfer of residence from Nazareth to Capernaum?
9. In what ancient tribal area is Capernaum located?
10. Show the relationship between the prophecy quoted by Matthew and his use made of it: what is the context of the prophecy and how did it offer hope to the people originally addressed? How did Jesus fulfill it?
11. What was the content of Jesus' preaching at this time?
12. What do these expressions mean:
 - a. "Sit in darkness"?
 - b. "The region and shadow of death"?
 - c. "Great light did spring up"?