

6. Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness?
7. What wilderness was it?
8. What was the Holy Spirit's purpose in taking Jesus there?
9. Why was not Jesus hungry until after the fast? (Cf. 4:2)
10. How could Satan have shown Jesus all of the world's kingdoms?
11. Explain what is meant by "tempting God."
12. Did the world's kingdoms really belong to Satan?
13. Did the temptations have any relation to Jesus' world mission? If so, what relationship?
14. What is the relationship between knowing the Word and will of God and resisting temptations?
15. What does Jesus' use of the OT as the final authority for His actions reveal about:
 - a. The OT as the progressive revelation given by God to a particular people?
 - b. the application of the Bible in general to particular problems faced by the believer?
16. What are temptations? Wherein does their real power lie? Can they always be recognized? If so, under what circumstances? If not, why not? Why should we pray to avoid temptations (Mt. 6:13)? Why does God allow His Son and His children to be tempted? Is something a temptation if one cannot see the wrong in it?

SPECIAL STUDY: TEMPTATION

I. THE LORD'S LIABILITY TO ALLUREMENT.

A. *Could Jesus be tempted so as to sin?* Yes must be the unequivocal response, because His incarnation necessitates it. If we are to believe that Jesus was to be tempted in *all* respects in which a human being is tempted (Heb. 4:15), then we are led to the realization that His subjection to every sort of human seduction must have begun long before the period forty days after His baptism. His birth was unique and miraculous, but His youth was normal in the human environment of Nazareth. His adult life indeed was marvelous, one-of-a-kind, yet fully human. It must be ever remembered that the Word was God before He became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1-14), but that fact must never be made to cast doubt upon the reality of the flesh in which He dwelt (Heb. 2:14). With the Father He shares these characteristics:

1. He lived without sin (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:21; 3:18; Jn. 8:46; I Jn. 3:5; II Cor. 5:21).
2. He faultlessly expressed God's character and nature (II Cor. 4:4-6; Jn. 8:29; 10:30; 12:45; Col. 1:15-19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3).
3. He fulfilled all of God's purposes (Jn. 10:17, 18, 36-38; 12:27; 15:10; Eph. 1:3-11; II Cor. 5:19).
4. He maintained that unique contact with God in a union unknown to all human experience and unshared by any other (Jn. 1:1-14; 10:30; 5:19, 20; 12:49, 50; 14:10, 11).

However, there are significant differences between the Father and the Son:

1. God cannot be tempted with evil, while Jesus was subject to all human temptations (Jas. 1:13; Heb. 2:14-18; Heb. 4:15) although He did not surrender Himself to any.
2. God is not subject to spiritual growth (I Pet. 1:16; Mt. 5:48), while Jesus advanced toward spiritual maturity (Lk. 2:40, 52; Heb. 2:10-18; 5:7-9), qualifying Himself to be man's Savior.
3. The Father was the object of Jesus' faith and the Hearer of His prayers (Heb. 5:7; Mt. 11:25, 26; Jn. 11:41, 42). Although Jesus was the Revealer of the mind of God, yet He received the Word of God as already revealed in the OT, putting His trust in it and obeying its precepts impeccably.
4. Jesus was born subject to law (Gal. 4:4); God was not. "Born under law" to Jesus meant responsibility for keeping or breaking it. If Jesus could not sin by breaking law, the law would be meaningless to Him.
5. The point of Jesus' assumption of human nature is that He might die for man's sins (Heb. 2:9, 14, 15); God could not die. (Cf. I Ti. 1:17; 6:16)
6. Jesus was fully man (Ro. 5:17-21; I Co. 15:21; Ac. 17:31), a body for the dwelling of all the fulness of Deity (Col. 1:19; 2:9)

The incarnation is the unique ^{ex}perience of Jesus only. He was thoroughly *man* and thoroughly *deity*. Human ignorance and per-

sonal "lack of" experience of this verity does not militate against its historicity. It is to be received on the strength of Jesus' truthfulness and His authority to reveal it.

There are several consequences that follow from believing that He could not actually be tempted to sin. Rejection of all that the Scriptures say regarding His human nature is serious enough, for that blames God for condemning man without knowing what being a man is really like. Further, if Jesus did not genuinely share all our human desires, His victory over Satan is a hollow, meaningless conquest as far as it concerns our facing of temptations. In that case, He could not provide us a true example that would help us to overcome, since there would always remain in us the suspicion that Jesus was some sort of angelic machine which "could not be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses."

But the Scripture evidences the fact that Jesus could sin by surrender to the devil's enticements. Out of this truth flow exciting conclusions.

1. Jesus has felt the fullest intensity of every temptation to sin, because He did not yield. It is not the man who is allured before feeling the last full measure of temptation who fully understands that seduction before which he has fallen, nor can he be perfectly sympathetic with other sinners in their trials, for he sinned before knowing the full power of the enticement. Only the sinless Jesus, who has resisted the pull of the desire clear to its end, can effectively come to the aid of those who have fallen.
2. Jesus conquered Satan, not as God but as man, any man, could have repelled the tempter. By using no special defenses available only to the "Son of God," He wrestled sin's mightiest champion as would any "son of God"—and won! But by doing this, He strikes from our mouths all of the lame excuses we offer for our sins. By risking all of Jesus' purity, and consequently, the world's salvation, on the outcome of such temptations as those in the wilderness, God shows for all eternity the inexcusability of human sin. Were there any question before, now no doubt is left as to why God is justified in sending the whole human race to hell. (Ro. 3:9, 19, 20, 23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22)

B. *Wherein was Jesus tempted?* The hesitation to admit the liability of our Lord to temptation is probably traceable to defective

views of His nature. These arise out of a natural tendency to over-emphasize either His deity or His manhood. Also the feebleness of human language to express such majestic truth as the incarnation of God "in 25 words or less," often cripples the truth rather than strengthens or clarifies it. May we generalize just to this extent: if the baptismal event of Jesus says to the world that this Man was God, then the temptation experience proclaims to all ages that this God also became Man. It is from this latter point of view that we study His temptations.

Jesus was perfectly sinless before and after the temptations, but He was a perfectly sinless *human* with all the desires that characterize life in the human body. Incarnation brings with it the characteristics of the *carnis*, flesh, one of which is temptability. But what is temptation?

A temptation is anything that throws the character into the crisis of choice. This is done by an incitement of *natural desires* to go beyond the limits set. Temptation is also a conflict of loyalties, a putting other good things above one's first loyalties. (Cf. Mt. 10:36 with Mk. 3:21; Jn. 12:27) The power of temptation lies in *human desires*. These are created by God in the make-up of the human personality, but may all be stimulated by Satan to thwart God's purpose for those desires. The Greeks had one word for these God-given desires (*epithumia*), a word which they used to describe right desires or longings as well as desires for something forbidden. The complex of desires in the human personality, as God designed it, is like a powerful rocket which can hurl an astronaut into space to explore the universe and advance man's knowledge, or it can hurl a nuclear warhead at other men to destroy lives. The rocket has the capacity for both operations. What it actually does depends upon who determines its use and controls it. The desires in our personality serve as fuel and power for the rocket, while our conscience is the guidance system. Thus, what we do depends upon the orientation data fed into our conscience, which, in turn, controls our desires. But, unlike the electronic brain in the rocket, our conscience can be affected by our desires, and it is exactly at these desires that temptations make their attack. If so, then Jesus, "who was tempted in all points like as we are (*kata panta kath' homoiotêta*)," felt the stress and strain of His basic human desires. But what are these desires? We shall see them more clearly as we are led to understand . . .

II. OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SINFUL SUGGESTION.

A, *A Matter of Desire*. The Christian view of personal desires is expressed by James: "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires." (Jas. 1:14 RSV) The following passages clarify this view. The Greek words, which are used to express the desire, are included in parenthesis for further comparison. Note that the passages are arranged into two groups: those expressions of right and proper desires, and those expressions that degenerate human desire into passion and lust. The more significant passages are printed in *italic* type.

GOOD, PROPER EXPRESSIONS OF DESIRE DESIRE AS LUST, PASSION

(epithumia, epithumēō)

Mt. 13:17; Lk. 15:16; 16:21; 17:22; 22:15; *Gal.* 5:17; Phil. 1:23; I Th. 2:17; I Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11; I Pet. 1:12; I Jn. 2:15-17 (?)

(epipothēō)

Ro. 1:11; Phil. 1:8; 2:26; II Co. 5:2; 7:7, 11; 9:14; I Th. 3:6; II Tim. 1:4; *I Pet.* 2:2

(zēloō)

I Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39; II Cor. 11:2; *Gal.* 4:18 (?)

(thelō)

Mt. 16:24; 19:21; 26:39; *Mk.* 10:43, 44; 14:36; *Jn.* 7:17; 15:7; 12:21; *Ro.* 7:15, 18, 19

(zēteō)

Mt. 6:21, 33; *Lk.* 12:31, 34; *Jn.* 5:30, 44; 7:18; 8:50; *Ro.* 2:7; *Col.* 3:1ff; II Cor. 12:14

(epizēteō): Heb. 13:14*(oregomai): Heb.* 11:16*(eudokia): Ro.* 10:1; II Th. 1:11*(epithumia, epithumēō)*

Mt. 5:28; *Mk.* 4:19; *Jn.* 8:44; *Ac.* 20:33, 34; *Ro.* 1:24; 6:12; 7:7f; 13:9, 14; I Co. 10:6; *Gal.* 5:16, 17, 24; *Eph.* 2:3; 4:22; *Col.* 3:5; I Th. 4:5; *I Tim.* 6:9; II Tim. 2:22; 3:6; 4:3; Tit. 2:12; 3:3; *Jas.* 1:14; 4:2; I Pet. 1:14; 2:11; 4:2, 3; II Pet. 1:4; 2:10; 3:3; *I Jn.* 2:15-17; *Jd.* 16, 18; *Rev.* 9:6

(zēloō)

I Cor. 13:4

(thelō)

Mt. 16:25; *Jn.* 5:40; 6:67; 8:44; I Th. 3:10

Some OT examples of good desires are the following: Ps. 21:2; 27:4; 37:4; 145:19; Prov. 10:24; 11:23; II Chron. 15:15; Isa. 26:8)

The following is a list of desires common to every man. As you respond to their force in your life, who or what governs what you will do about their demands?

1. The desire to PRESERVE SELF: satisfying body needs for food, clothing, shelter; self-defense by flight or fighting; repulsion.
2. MATING desires: sex; care for family; the appeal of one's young.
3. SOCIAL desires; gregariousness; companionship; approval; self-assertion; pride; ambition; competition.
4. Desires to SUBMIT: tendency to imitate heroes; conform to law; to regard higher powers with respect.
5. ACQUISITIVE desires: joy of ownership.
6. CREATIVE desires: pleasure of being a power or a cause capable of creating or destroying.
7. AESTHETIC desires: enjoyment of the beautiful.

Though God has integrated these desires into our personality, yet they are the very targets of Satan's keenest temptations. Let it never be thought that Jesus, as Man, did not experience every one of these desires. Certainly, the incitements to sin came to Jesus from without; nevertheless, appeal was made to what truly existed within Him. It seems that the tempter can pit one or two of these desires against each other and against other desires in such an unshakeable combination that we become confused about which way is right! (See Ro. 7:13-25)

How often perfectly good attitudes and desires are so close to sinful desires and a godless mentality! Here is another reason why we have such difficulty steering a straight course through life. Compare the following short list of good traits that Satan can twist into vices:

Caution and prudence is so often close to cowardice and indecision.

Belief taken without sufficient evidence becomes credulity.

Agreeableness and tact are often mistaken for compromise and falsehood.

Concentration of one's devotion may become just bigotry or fanaticism.

Confidence may swell into cocksureness and presumption.

Contentment oversleeps into self-satisfaction and appeasement.

Frugality and farsightedness struggles with miserliness and greed.

Humility could devolve into blind submissiveness.

Righteousness when praised nurtures hypocrisy.

Tolerance of too much becomes indiscrimination.

Curiosity about the affairs of others becomes meddling and nosiness.

An inquiring mind, when it refuses to know, becomes agnostic.

Broad-mindedness is close to spinelessness, too often without strong convictions.

But resolution is near to stubbornness.

And bravery or fearlessness is nigh unto folly and foolishness.

By taking advantage of the natural needs expressed by human desires, Satan makes his allurements appear harmless. What often makes a temptation so attractive is the list of apparently excellent reasons for going along with it. The only true safeguard against this confusion is to seek to know and obey God as our deepest desire and highest joy. Perhaps the most enlightening spiritual exercise to discover our vulnerability to temptation is simply to ask ourselves what we desire. Here are some problems for reflection that will help one see himself as temptation's target:

1. What is the **ONE** compelling loyalty, interest or desire of my life?
2. What one goal am I seeking to accomplish with my life?
3. What or where is the true treasure of my heart? For what do I spend the most of my money? my leisure time? my conversation among friends?
4. How do all my other basic desires align themselves with the one basic motivation for my life? Or, how may these be subordinated to it when conflicts arise?
5. In my social relationships, whose praise do I seek?

Other questions might be helpful. But, in the light of these suggested, it is seen that the problems in resisting temptations and solving conflicts of interest involve all that makes us men. This is why sin is not a single act unrelated to what we are. This is also the reason why conversion to Jesus cannot be reduced to a mechanical five-point ritual, but must mean the commitment of every thought and desire to obedience to Him:

B. *Some Lessons to be Learned:*

1. There are two viewpoints to every trial or temptation.
 - a. Temptation by allurements for evil purpose to ensnare in evil;
 - b. Putting character to the test for the purpose of proving its mettle.

(Study the following passages to see how both viewpoints can be very closely interwoven into the fabric of the same temptation, even if one or the other viewpoint will be more clearly in evidence: Mt. 6:13; Lk. 8:13; Jn. 6:6; Ac. 20:19; I Cor. 10:9-13; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:1; I Th. 3:5; I Tim. 6:9; Heb. 11:17, 37; Jas. 1:2, 12-14; I Pet. 1:6; II Pet. 2:9.)

2. *How temptations are offered or presented.* Just as the temptations of Jesus were many-pronged, appealing to the fleshly appetites, to His moral character and to His spiritual perception, even so our daily allurements will be many-sided, attacking at once the body and soul by driving one to the limit of endurance, while keeping the other off balance by uneven stresses and strains. Satan is not so stupid as to put people on their guard by coming to them boldly and telling them that what he is about to suggest will be sin. Rather, he begins subtly and reasonably to prepare the mind for seduction. He must first corrupt the principles before his real purpose can be made clear. Once the confidence of the victim is gained and his desires excited, the enticement is presented in its most appealing form to that particular person. Satan repeats his approach, varying his emphasis, until the victim falls.

3. *Why man must be tried or tempted.* If there were no choice, no power nor pressures to do evil, we could not have any moral victory over evil, nor would we have that proof of character that is obtained only by self-control under fire. We must win the victory over Satan, not by never having fought him during temptations, but by overcoming him in actual combat. Precious promises are offered to those who overcome (Rev. 2:7, 10, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 11, 12, 21) and victories the order of the day for the people of God (I Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5; II Cor. 2:4).
4. *The dangerous deceitfulness of temptations.* The inability to see the sinful implications hidden under pages of good reasons for our indulgence of any desire does not remove that sinfulness. It is the devil's most practiced art to present wrong as right, pleasant, popular. He can also raise so many doubts about right actions as to make them appear to be wrong and worthy of all condemnation. The most frequent problem to solve as one faces temptation is to recognize it as a temptation. If he does not see what could be wrong about a particular action, he may justify that act for himself and be satisfied with his justifications. However, failure to sense wrong in a thing does not change God's condemnation of the sin involved. Since temptations, in their very essence, are wrong courses of action deceitfully disguised as right actions, we must learn to recognize them for what they are. How? We must avail ourselves of God's means.
5. *The way of victory over temptation:*
 - a. Jesus conquered by COMPLETE RELIANCE UPON GOD'S WORD. God has given revelation of great principles which govern ALL of our basic decisions, although He has not revealed specific prohibitions of every minute misdeed we might dream up. Our responsibility is to know these principles (II Tim. 2:15, 25, 26; 3:14, 15), practice them by daily meditation and actual experience, in order that, when specific temptations call us to violate these great, far-reaching prin-

ciples, our first and almost automatic reaction would be, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (I cannot!)" (Gen. 39:9b)

- b. By UNHESITATING REFUSALS. If we wish to be done with temptations, we must get rid of the tempter! Jesus fought him honorably and victoriously, then commanded him to leave. Likewise, we must put up a stiff fight, but in the same way as did Jesus. Satan is no match for the firepower available to one man who trusts God! (See Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8, 9; Eph. 6:10-18) We must reject without hesitation any evil suggestion. Sometimes flight is just as honorable as fight (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 2:22, 23; I Cor. 6:18; 10:13, 14), as in the case of Joseph (Gen. 39:12), if flight means resistance to temptation by refusing any longer to listen to the tempter's appeals to our desires. It may also mean choosing, by means of a strategic retreat, the ground upon which the battle shall be fought. Some men need to stop facing a particular temptation until they have fled to the Father's side for instruction, encouragement, warning and strength, before continuing the battle.

Contrast the reasons given for the failure of those who are overcome by temptations. They turned away from listening to the truth, choosing teachers that suit their desires (II Tim. 4:3, 4). Ever listening to anybody, they can never arrive at a secure knowledge of truth (II Tim. 3:7). All along they have been following their own desires which they let deceive them into thinking they possessed the true, happy life (II Pet. 3:3; Jude 16, 18).

6. *We are not the only ones tempted.* Just as Jesus did not wrestle with Satan to gain the mastery only for Himself, but also for us, even so we must keep our mind on others in our striving against sin in ourselves. This will help us to be wary of our own susceptibility to sin, when we reach out to help those who are sorely tempted (Gal. 6:1, 2). Further, our God-given freedom to do many things that some would consider wrong or forbidden might tempt them to join us in the enjoyment of those freedoms which their conscience does not permit them. In this case, their

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? *Anachôreô* 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, metairō, apbiēmi, poreuomai, amachōreō, chōrizo, exeimi, chōreō, 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 (*katoikeō*), 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"?

Section 9

JESUS CALLS FOUR FISHERMEN

(Parallels: Mark 1:16-21; Luke 5:1-11)

TEXT: 4:18-22

18. And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.
19. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.
20. And they straightway left the nets, and followed him.
21. And going on from thence he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.
22. And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. How long do you suppose these four fishermen had known Jesus before He called them to be fishermen of men?
- b. What does Jesus mean by calling them to be "fishers of men"? What does He want them to do in that capacity?
- c. Why do you think Matthew emphasizes the immediacy of their response? ("straightway" of verses 20 and 22)
- d. How are the families of these working men to be supported if these four bread-winners leave their occupations to follow this itinerate rabbi over the countryside? Very likely, someone asked this question that day. How would you answer it?
- e. Vigorous efforts are being made to enlist the most capable young men for hundreds of promising vocations. Such efforts and the procedures used are generally approved or at least expected by the parents of these young men. Yet, when efforts are made to encourage these same young people to enlist themselves in the Christian ministry, their parents sometimes object strenuously to the "pressure" being put on their children. What is your reaction to the problem?

f. Apparently, Zebedee made no effort to hinder his sons' entering the discipleship of Jesus. What kind of man does this seem to indicate him to have been?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

One morning while Jesus was walking beside the Lake of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother, Andrew, throwing their cast-net into the sea, for fishing was their occupation.

On this same day, the people were crowding closely around Jesus to hear God's message. As He stood on the shore, He noticed that the fishermen had given up their fishing and had beached their boats, leaving them there while they washed their nets. Jesus boarded Simon's boat and asked him to push off a little from the shore. Then Jesus sat down and continued His teaching the crowds from His seat in the boat.

When He had finished speaking, He addressed Simon, "Put out into deep water and all of you let down your nets for a catch."

But Simon argued, "But, Sir, we have been hard at work all night and caught nothing at all. But if you say so, I will lower the nets."

They did so and caught an enormous shoal of fish—so big that the nets began to break! So they signalled to their fellows in the other boat to come and help them. This they did, loading both boats so full of fish that they rode so low in the water that they almost sank. When Peter saw what had happened, he threw himself down at Jesus' knees, exclaiming, "Master, leave me, for I'm a sinful man!" For Peter and his companions, James and John, Zebedee's sons who were Simon's partners, were staggered at the haul of fish which they had taken. Jesus replied to Simon, "Do not be afraid, Simon. From now on your catch will be *men*."

So they brought the boats to shore at different parts of the beach. As Jesus stepped from Peter's boat, He invited Peter and Andrew, "Follow me and I will teach you how to take men alive!" They left their nets at once and followed Jesus.

Going on up the beach a little further from there, Jesus saw James and John aboard their boat with their father Zebedee, repairing the nets broken in places by the recent catch. Immediately He called them and, just as quickly, they left the boat, their father Zebedee, the hired servants—everything, and followed Him.

NOTES

I. THE MEMOIRS OF THE CALL

In the PARAPHRASE/HARMONY it is assumed that the incidents recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-21; Lk. 5:1-11) are basically the same event told from two quite different points of view. A simple comparison of the first two Gospels will indicate very slight variations in wording, whereas Luke describes a miraculous catch of fish, an event which concludes with the call of Peter and several fishermen to leave all to follow Jesus. It is quite possible that what is described in two ways is really two stories of two separate events. Matthew, according to his topical arrangement, places the call of the four fishermen in a general relationship of Jesus' entrance into Galilee; Mark does the same (1:14-20). However, Mark makes the event precede the "busy day of miracles" (1:21-38), whereas Luke (4:31—5:11) lists the call of the fishermen after it. Yet, Luke is not too precise about the time element, although his tendency is to follow chronological sequences. For this latter reason, it might well be asked whether Luke intends to tell the same basic event as the other two. Resolving this question involves letting the witnesses tell their story and our attempting to harmonize the facts they present, without our being able to cross-examine the witnesses. The importance of trying to solve the problem lies in the determination whether we have all the available materials at hand before beginning to interpret the passage, or whether we have too much material, putting together two separate events as if they were one.

There are at least two ways to harmonize the facts, if the story be one told from two viewpoints:

1. First, the call; second, the miraculous catch. Edersheim (*Life*, I, 476) argues for the first view, showing Peter's need for such a demonstration of Jesus' power to make him truly a "fisher of men." Peter heard it all in the boat, as he sat close by, in the shadow of His Majesty. Then, this was the teaching of which he had become a disciple; this, the net and the fishing to which he was just called. How utterly miserable, in one respect, must it have made him. Could such an one as he ever hope, with whatever toil, to be a successful fisher? . . . Presently it shall all be brought to light; not only that it may be made clear, but that, alike, the lesson and the help may be seen.

2. First, the miraculous catch; second, the call of the fishermen. There is good psychological reason for placing the miraculous catch first. In this case, Jesus is pictured as wanting to impress upon the minds of these fishermen the majestic authority of this One with whom they were to serve. In addition, providing them with such a large catch which they, in turn, could sell for no small sum, he could help them to justify their absence from home and business for a time. Further, the force of this miracle would not be lost on the people at home either, for their reluctance to permit these able-bodied bread-winners to forsake their occupation would disappear in the same confidence in Jesus to provide in the future, even as He did on this occasion of their call.

Therefore, the notes which follow take the general view that the Synoptics provide here merely two views of the same event. The sequence of action suggested here is that of the PARAPHRASE/HARMONY. The exact relation of the accounts in Matthew and Mark to that of Luke, however, must remain in doubt, inasmuch as the essentials are tenuous or missing.

II. THE MEN WHO WERE CALLED

4:18 **Walking by the sea.** Where Jesus has been, cannot be known with surety, due to the chronological problems in harmonizing the accounts. Perhaps this call of the four fishermen is the first intention of Jesus as He returns to Capernaum, from Nazareth; however, His fame precedes Him and a crowd gathers, following Him to the beach. Accordingly, although He saw the fishermen first, He taught the crowd before commanding these men to haul in the miraculous catch. **Sea of Galilee** is only a large lake, being only 6 miles wide by 12 miles long. It has probably been called a number of names by men caught out upon its boiling surface during one of its notoriously sudden, furious storms. The official names, however, have been "Sea of Chinnereth" (Josh. 12:27) probably from a fortified city that stood near its western shore (Josh. 19:35); "Waters of Gennesar" (I Macc. 11:67) or "Lake Gennesaret" (Lk. 5:1) from the small plain on its western side (Mt. 14:34); "Sea of Tiberias" was the name drawn from the prominent city of the NT period, located on its western shore (Jn. 6:1; 21:1). For further description, see on 8:23ff. The waters of this lake teemed with fish, thus providing food and employment for these commercial fishermen.

He saw two brethren . . . fishers. But what really did Jesus see? He saw men whose principle distinguishing characteristics were their being UN-distinguished in practically every regard. Any other's eye might not have seen in these men the sterling qualities that Jesus could discern there and later develop:

1. They were accustomed to hardship. Because of their experiences with the hard life, they were well-seasoned men.
2. They were humble men, capable of being taught. Their heads were not completely jammed with rabbinic foolishness to the point they would rather argue than listen and learn from Jesus.
3. They were diligent, working men, not ashamed of honest toil nor seeking the easy life.
4. They were already His disciples. Logically, Jesus sought for apostle-material among those who were already aware of some of His teachings, character and mission. Such a call as He would address to them could not have been made, unless they had something of this understanding. (See on 4:19)

Casting a net into the sea. Three modes of fishing are mentioned in the Scriptures:

1. Hook: Mt. 17:27; Job. 41:1, 2
2. Spears: Job 41:7
3. Nets, of which there are two principle types:
 - a. The Cast-net (*amphibléstron*) is a circular net which is thrown out over the water and allowed to settle down in the water, weighted down by lead weights fixed to its perimeter. The fish are thus entrapped in the center under the net as the fishermen tread down the net and draw the bottom edges together. Obviously, such a net would be that used by the men when Jesus first saw them near the beach (Mt. 4:18; Mk. 1:16).
 - b. The Dragnet (*sagéné*) or also (*dikturon*) is a long net, leaded on one edge with floats on the other edge which make it literally "stand up" in the water, producing a fence which fishermen may use to surround a school of fish by extending the net between two boats which bring

it close enough to shore that fishermen may land the catch in the shallows. If the water is deep, the boats can bring the ends slowly together to form a circle. A diver closes the bottom of the net and the entrapped fish are hauled out of the water and loaded into the boats. Jesus ordered the men to lower this net for the great catch. (Lk. 5:2, 4, 5, 6)

- c. The "nets" (Mt. 4:20, 21: *ta diktna*) probably indicates a general expression for all nets of whatever type.

III. THE MOMENT OF THE CALL

4:19 **And he saith unto them, Come ye after me.** The events which preceded this call and the circumstances in which it was given help to explain both what Jesus meant by what He said, as well as the reaction of the men to whom it was directed:

1. These fishermen had already been personally acquainted with Jesus for at least eight or nine months (Jn. 1-4), having both heard His teaching and seen some miracles.
2. The call came after Jesus' first open break with traditional religious authority and after the beginning of the persecution of Jesus by the Jews (Jn. 2:13-22; 4:1). Thus, Jesus challenged these men to enter into a formal fellowship with Him and His strained rapport with formal Judaism.
3. The miraculous catch of fish is also suggested as preceding this call. Plummer notes (145) that it frequently happens that one experience touches a man, when many similar experiences fail to do so. Yet, without being realized, they prepared the heart for that one experience that changed the man's life. These disciples had already seen some of Jesus' miracles, but this one struck home to them personally. The striking feature about this one was its relation to their daily toil: it was done with their nets and their boats. It is natural that it should make such an impression upon them.

IV. THE MEANING OF THE CALL

4:19 **Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.** What did Jesus intend these fishermen to understand by this invitation?

A. What Jesus did not mean:

1. This is not a call to become His disciples, for that they were already. He is calling them to learn evangelism.
2. This is not a call to worldly glory, for they were still to be, in some way, fishermen. What compensation did He offer them to leave all and follow Him? Apparently, He promised them nothing but the joy of righteousness and the satisfaction of servants of the Messiah. (Cf. Mt. 19:27) Only at the Last Supper did Jesus announce positions of honor in His kingdom in terms that approximated even remotely the language of compensation expected by self-seeking disciples. (Lk. 22:28)
3. Jesus is not causing them to vow never again to touch their nets, for they could certainly, without prejudice to their devoted acceptance of this call, earn a little occasionally at their old work. And they probably went fishing whenever Jesus remained in Capernaum. They still had to eat and support families. (Cf. Jn. 21:1ff)
4. This is not merely a call to learn more doctrine or better practice of already known truth, but a call to begin a completely new life of discipleship on a higher, vaster level than ever before realized in their acquaintance with Jesus.

B. What Jesus did mean:

1. **Come ye after me.** He wanted these disciples to be with Him! He wanted them to learn His spirit. His message, His ways. They had listened to Him before. They had seen Him in action. Until now they were relatively uncommitted to the movement He represented. But in this moment there came to them this challenge to throw in their lot with Him. Such a call could not come too soon, for these four and others were to be His witnesses. It would be their specific task to give to the world a trustworthy record of the Master's message and deeds. They must represent His character and mirror His spirit accurately. But to do this, their impressions of Him must be formed over long periods and under many, diverse conditions. But their following Jesus must also

mean the habitual abandonment of their former occupations and earthly ties whereinsofar these interfered with their acceptance of this call.

2. **I will make you.** They who become apostles of Jesus are not to be self-made men. He calls them to learn to evangelize by practical experiences, both by watching Jesus and by doing it themselves. Bales (166) quotes Weigle's beautiful description of Jesus' method of teaching:

"His training of the twelve was by life with them and for them. . . . Not content merely to teach them by word of mouth, He bade them follow Him. He gave Himself to them, and gave them work to do for Him. They went with Him in His journeys; they dwelt constantly in His presence. They helped Him preach His kingdom; they too worked miracles. He even sent them out for themselves, to travel throughout the land teaching and healing. He was preparing them to take His place and to carry on His work; and He prepared them thoroughly. They learned by doing. They caught His spirit by association with Him. Through knowledge, friendship and work He brought them to spiritual maturity . . . He was Himself the Ideal that He sought to teach."

What sheer, matchless courage Jesus must possess to speak these words to any man! He knew that the next few years would be spent not only in the public eye but under the closest scrutiny of these whom He calls to be His most intimate personal associates. Bales (*ibid.*) cites Stalker's observation:

"To the Twelve the most valuable part of their connection with Christ was simply the privilege of being with Him—of seeing that marvelous life day by day, and daily receiving the silent, almost unobserved impress of His character. St. John, reflecting on His three year's experience long afterwards, summed it up by saying, 'We beheld His glory!' . . . No eyes are so keen as those of students. If admitted close to a man, they take immediate stock of his resources. They are hero-worshippers when they believe in a professor. but

their scorn is unmeasured if they disbelieve in him. They can be dazzled by a reputation; but only massiveness of character and thoroughness of attainment can be sure of permanently impressing them."

How desperately they needed that molding which would be provided in the instruction and example of Jesus is best seen by contrasting what they were when Jesus called them with what they must be when He left them to return to the Father. The preachers of the Christian Gospel would have to have greater hearts than narrow, Jewish provincialism, freer consciences than those bound by traditional religion, greater intellectual attainment than that represented by the conventional learning of the day. They must learn to rejoice and triumph in the stumbling-block and foolishness of the cross. They must be willing to bear a cross themselves. But at the moment of their call to service what were they? They were the products of an environment made up of people who ultimately rejected and crucified Jesus. Obviously, they had much to learn and more to unlearn. They, like us, were slow to do both.

But the confidence of Jesus in His words, "I will make you," is contagious! Although there are some who will betray our trust, there are others who would respond to our confidence in them. How much more Jesus would be able to get out of His men simply because He showed them that, for all their weaknesses and failures, He could still trust them to the important task to which He called them! If Peter, for instance, feels the expanse of distance between Christ and himself as "a sinful man," because of a new sense of the Lord's holiness and majesty, he must have heard these confident, comforting words of Jesus as great encouragement to believe that the result of his ministry and life was in the hands of Jesus.

3. **Fishers of men.** Out of these three words grows that magnificent task which forms the book of Acts! He was calling them to the glorious honor of saving souls from death and establishing a Church that would march across the Mediterranean world conquering men's hearts and which would endure to the end of time.

V. MOBILIZATION TO THE CALL

4:20, 22 **And they straightway left the nets . . . the boat and their father, and followed him.** Did not these stalwart brothers comprehend the implications of this call to their family, friends and acquaintances? Yes, Peter later expresses the clean break that they had made, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." (Mt. 19:27a) But who would take care of Peter's family in his absence? Possibly a near relative, too old to attempt active campaigning with Jesus, could handle the fishing business well enough to justify the absence of Peter's hands at the nets. Hired servants stepped into the place of James and John (Mk. 1:20).

But, why did they follow Jesus that day? A. B. Bruce (*Training*, 16) rightly denies that these men were either idle, discontent with their former lot, or ambitious:

"Ambition needs a temptation: it does not join a cause which is obscure and struggling, and whose success is doubtful: it strikes when success is assured, and when the movement it patronizes is on the eve of its glorification."

Considering how little they really understood of the nature of the King in whose service they were enrolling themselves, or of the kingdom that they would proclaim, one would say that they were enthusiasts. For the moment, at least until Jesus could teach them better, their heads were pounding with visions of a glorious messianic kingdom about to be set up with Jesus wearing David's crown. These visions, immature and ill-conceived as they might have been, drove them from their families and occupations to go into the service of Jesus. Though it appeared that they left on a fool's errand, yet, with all their misconceptions and ignorance, it was into JESUS' hands that they placed their strength, their influence, their lives. They were just ordinary folk who gave themselves to Him and He can do anything with people like that! What faith to follow the unknown Jesus of Nazareth!

Whatever became of those men and that enthusiastic decision? Look up these passages, for they tell the heart-warming story of their discipleship: *Peter and Andrew*: Mt. 8:14; 10:2; 14:28, 29; 15:15; 16:16-23; 17:18, 24ff; 18:21; 19:27; 26:33-75; Mk. 5:37; 11:21; 13:3; 14:29-72; 16:7; Lk. 8:45-51; 22:8; Jn. 1:40-44; 6:8, 68; 12:22; 13:6-9, 24, 36; 18:10-27; 20:2-6; 21:2-21; Acts 1-15; Gal. 1:18;

2:7-14; I, II Peter. *James and John*; Mt. 10:2; 17:1f; Mk. 1:29; 5:37f; 9:33; 10:35f; 13:3; 14:33; Lk. 5:10; 9:54; 22:8; Ac. 1:13; 3:4; 8:14; 12:2; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 1:1, 9; 22:8; the Gospel of John, I, II, III John and Revelation.

Behold the glorious, surpassing wisdom of Jesus. He chose fishermen to change the world! He ever chooses the foolish to confound the wise. (I Cor. 1:18-31, esp. vv. 26-28) If Jesus can make such everlasting good use of such humble instruments as these four fishermen, dear friend, what can He do with your life when surrendered to Him?

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Name the four fishermen.
2. The father of James and John was _____; the father of Peter and Andrew was _____.
3. Did Peter and Andrew live in Capernaum? (Cf. Jn. 1:44)
4. What were the fishermen doing when Jesus first saw them?
5. At what time of day approximately did Jesus approach them?
6. What did Jesus ask Simon to do?
7. Why did Simon do it?
8. Had these men known Jesus before? If so, when or how long?
9. What did Jesus ask all the four fishermen to do?
10. What did He promise or predict concerning them?
11. What inducement did Jesus offer them to justify their leaving all to follow him? Did Jesus mention any compensations? What was the motivation that caused this sudden, clean break with one occupation to take up that of following Jesus?
12. The four "forsook all" and followed their Master. (Lk. 5:11) Did the "all" in any case include wife or children?
13. Tell all you know about each of the lives of the four fishermen, their past, their work with Jesus, their families, their service as leaders in the early church, and, if possible, their death.
14. What is the significance or importance of Jesus' calling these and other disciples to be with Him from this point of time on? Or, why must the choice of certain disciples to be with Jesus be made early in His work? (Cf. Ac. 1:21, 22)
15. Describe a typical fishing trip of the four fishermen, telling how they used their boats, nets, their hours for fishing, their methods.

Section 10

JESUS PREACHES AND HEALS IN GALILEE

(Parallels: Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44)

TEXT: 4:23-25

23. And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people.
24. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them.
25. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Matthew introduces this obviously general summary into his account at this point?
- b. What does this section indicate about the nature of Jesus' popular ministry?
- c. If Jesus wanted to start a new religion, why did He begin in the Jewish synagogue? What good could be accomplished by beginning this way? What is the connection, if any, between classic Judaism and religion of Jesus?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Then Jesus went all over Galilee, as He continued teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of God's approaching reign, curing every disease or malady that was among the people. His reputation spread even throughout the whole territory of Syria. Sufferers from every kind of illness or torturing disease, racked with pain, those possessed with demons, the epileptics, the paralyzed—they were all brought to Him and He healed them! Countless crowds of people followed Him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and from Transjordan.

NOTES

I. THE EVANGELISTIC EFFORT

4:23 **And Jesus went about in all Galilee.** With these three verses Matthew summarizes the first general tour of Galilee, of which the chapters that follow may be specific incidents. Jesus apparently made three such evangelistic tours of Galilee in the effort to win its populace: this one, another after the onset of unbelief (Lk. 8:1-3), and a third just before the collapse of His popularity (Mt. 9:35—11:1).

Though Matthew does not record it, Mark (1:35-39) and Luke (4:42-44) both tell what significant preparation Jesus made before embarking upon His first great evangelistic campaign. After a busy day of great popularity, preaching and prodigies, Jesus arose early the next morning to pray alone. Peter's words of rebuke and anxiety only served to heighten the temptation to satisfy all the wants of His townspeople at Capernaum, "Everyone is looking for you." A synagogue full of expectant and admiring people eager to listen might have satisfied the ambition of many a rabbi. Yet Jesus has other plans and goals to reach: "Let us go elsewhere into the other towns that I may preach the good news of the kingdom of God there also; for that is why I was sent." Jesus' eye was on the nation, not upon that small-town excitement which had turned the heads of His disciples. His mission was not mainly or simply humanitarian! His mission was redemption! His was not to one small city, but to the whole flock of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The natural compassion of God within Him for suffering humanity caused Jesus to minister to their bodies. But His miracles were intended to point the mind beyond the acts themselves. He intended that these miracles should function as signs of His identity and prepare their minds for His message (Jn. 5:20; 10:24, 25; 14:10-14). They must see that through this Man God is compassionately and mercifully working in their midst and that the message of this One was that of God! How often these signs were misunderstood may be gathered from outstanding examples such as Capernaum, who, ironically, here wishes to keep Him from leaving her (cf. Mt. 11:20-24).

teaching in their synagogues. For a full treatment of the subject "synagogue," see under standard Bible reference works, especially Edersheim's detailed descriptions (*Life*, I, chap. X). Jesus could not have chosen a more logical approach to the Jewish people than through

the synagogue, for this was the most important institution in the life of His people, with the only single exception of the temple. Though some teaching was possible in the temple (see, for example: Jn. 5:14ff; 7:14—10-18, 22-39; Lk. 19:47, 48), yet the synagogue was unquestionably the institution essentially adapted for teaching. Further, the liturgy of the synagogue was such that it furnished Him the opportunity that He could best utilize for starting His formal public teaching. The ruler or president of the synagogue could invite to speak any person whom he judged to be qualified. Thus, at least at the first, there was an open door to Jesus in any town large enough to have a synagogue. Then, after Jesus had taught a particular lesson, there would have been time for discussion of the new doctrine He brought, for questions, for talk and fellowship with Him. (Illustrations: Lk. 4:16-37; Mk. 1:21-28; Mt. 12:9-14)

Those Christians who tend to reject various human inventions as unworthy of Christian practice or consideration on the ground that they are without divine approval should ponder our Lord's acceptance and use of the synagogue. The synagogue has no proven origin prior to the Babylonian captivity in which it arose out of a felt need for worship of God in a strange land. Certainly, true worship had to be rendered Jehovah at Jerusalem in the temple and at the stated feast-days and hours and in the appointed way. Yet the more devout Jews, living in captivity and having no sanctuary, altar or priesthood, felt the need to hear the word of God and pray together. And even after their return from exile, they continued their synagogue practice even in Jerusalem where stood first Zerubbabel's temple and later Herod's temple at which all the Mosaic sacrifices were offered (Ac. 6:9; Jn. 2:13-20) and where all the services were kept. The synagogue as an institution served mainly for a local tribunal as well as school house for elementary education. However, worship, in the sense of prayers and reading of the Scriptures, developed into a regular "service" or liturgy before the time of Jesus. In this human invention, brought into being without demonstrable divine sanction or prohibition, Jesus and His apostles participated by using to the full the opportunity it provided not only for proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom, but also for their own personal worship. Obviously, they would continue this latter only as long as their good relationship to Judaism remained intact. With the gradual disintegration of those ties that began during Jesus' ministry and continued until the ultimately necessary mutual separation

of Judaism and Christianity as well as the establishment of a distinct, Christian worship, the frequenting of the synagogues became less and less.

While Jesus knew that at Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship God (Jn. 4:19-22; cf. Dt. 12:1-14), yet, by His apparent approval and usage of the synagogue, He indicates that the mere fact that a thing—a project, a tool, an aid, an instrument, a means—has no particular divine sanction or prohibition, is no good argument against its use. He ever laid the emphasis on the manner and motives for which a thing is used. The synagogue could NEVER be used as a substitute for the temple. The two existed side by side in Jesus' day and He worshiped BOTH at the temple at the stated feasts AND at the synagogue. (Cf. Lk. 4:16) For Him the synagogue did not pose a choice between itself and the temple, for worship at the temple was God's clear command. At the same time, He worshipped and taught in the synagogue, because it was a most logical and practical means of giving witness to His reliance upon the law and the prophets and His example taught the importance of practical, weekly devotion to God by praying with God's people.

Further, the influence of the synagogue-plan upon the formation of the Christian congregation after Pentecost cannot be overlooked. Inasmuch as the synagogue had been so much a part of the culture of the apostles, it should not be at all surprising that they should utilize its basic form of worship and government when they established the Church. Rather, it perhaps would have been more surprising had they not done so, although Jesus could have instructed them in a completely different form of worship and government. The fact that He did not should cause His disciples to re-evaluate their acceptance or rejection of things not either prohibited or sanctioned in God's word.

For more direct information on the synagogue, see standard reference works and the following suggestive scriptures: Mt. 6:2-5; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:6, 34; Mk. 1:21-29, 39; 3:1; 5:22-38; 6:2; Lk. 4:15-38, 44; 6:6; 7:5; 8:41; 11:43; 12:11; 13:10; 20:46; 21:12; Jn. 6:59; 9:22; 12:42; 16:2; 18:20; Ac. 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 14; 41:1; 15:21; 17:1-17; 18:4-26.

preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing.

Matthew summarized Jesus' activities in such a way as to express perfectly His true purposes, as declared by the Lord Himself (Mk. 1:38; Lk. 4:43):

1. Jesus came to reveal the MIND of God. He defeated man's ignorance and corrected his misunderstandings.
 - a. Not about the universe or the world in general, for man could learn this on his own, given enough time.
 - b. But about the true knowledge of God, man was in gross ignorance. Jesus came to reveal what man could not have found out by himself. Decisively He puts an end to all groping and guessing about God by revealing Him!
 - c. And man had a lot to learn about the true nature of himself. Man is at his very best as servant of God, as a subject of God's kingdom: this is that for which God planned man, not for self-rule or self-satisfaction. He revealed God's will for man.
2. Jesus came to reveal the HEART of God. He conquered man's heart by demonstrating the Almighty's loving concern for man, by healing his diseases. This was very important:
 - a. Man, writhing in pain or tortured by a lingering illness, finds sermons about high morality and noble ideals quite unconnected with his personal, painful reality. He might ask himself, "What does God care if I waste away here on this bed of affliction?"
 - b. Then, Jesus mercifully touches the man's affliction, heals his body and opens the man's grateful heart to the message of the kingdom. Now the man is ready to listen and respond to Jesus.
 - c. Matthew lays a proper emphasis on this healing ministry by mentioning both the great variety of healings that Jesus accomplished as well as the widely scattered areas from which people came to be healed.

II. THE EXTENSIVE EFFECTIVENESS

4:24 The report about Him went forth into all Syria.

It is not easy to establish the exact bounds of *Syria* in Jesus' time nor the exact use Matthew may make of the term. In OT times Syria had been the small country just north of Palestine. But following the conquests of Alexander the Great and the Maccabean period,

Syria had come to mean the whole area from Egypt clear up to the Orontes River and Antioch.

Note how Luke in the parallel (4:44) uses the word *Judea*, not in the sense of "the area around Jerusalem," but in the sense of "the whole country of the Jews" or "Palestine." He often does this. (Cf. Lk. 1:5; 7:17; 23:5; Ac. 2:9; 10:37)

Even if Matthew intends the smaller region, obviously the fame of Jesus is travelling like a prairie fire. Certainly there were Jews living in Damascus (Ac. 9:2, 20-22) and in Antioch (Ac. 11:19), whose business and family connections kept them in touch with Palestine. Besides, the regular caravan routes from Babylon to Egypt passed directly through Galilee and carried all the most interesting gossip great distances.

They brought unto him all those who were sick. Because of the mixed population of Galilee and the certainly Gentile population of Syria, it is incompatible with the merciful love of Jesus to think that non-Jews brought to Him should be turned away. (Cf. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Lk. 17:11-18) **Sick with various diseases:** for specific cases, see 8:1-17; 9:18-31. Those **possessed with demons:** for examples, note 8:28-34; 9:32-34. For discussion of *demons and demoniacs*, see comments on 8:28ff. **Epileptic**, a later case: 17:15. **Paralytic** means any lame or partially or totally paralyzed person; specific case: 9:1-8. **And He healed them!** What glorious, un-failing power! There were none sent away, rejected due to failure: there were no incurable cases. There was no anxious waiting for weeks when Jesus touched those bodies.

III. THE ELECTRIFYING EFFECT

4:25 **Great multitudes followed Him.** What an eager, excited audience to whom His earth-shaking messages could be preached! He has their attention: their hearts are open. But where did these crowds come from? From all over Palestine, says Matthew. (See map)

Decapolis, is a name meaning "ten cities," which refers to the federation of ten independent city-states located all but one (Scythopolis/Beth-Shan) on the east side of the Jordan Valley. They were inhabited mostly by Greeks or Romans. Because they were completely independent of local rule, Matthew rightly separates them from the area "beyond the Jordan," although, logically and geographically, Decapolis was also beyond the Jordan.

ET CETERA

The sheer generality of this passage draws our attention to the all-sufficiency of Jesus. He can meet man at any point of his human experience, at any physical crisis, at any spiritual condition, and save him! Matthew's swift summary also gives another impression: Jesus is keenly interested and especially drawn to the "et ceteras" of human existence. Without doubt there were in these vast assemblages individual wrecks who had lost all hope, all self-esteem, all love. Yet, Jesus had time to deal gently with each one! Whether they were strangers, foreigners and sinners of every sort mattered not to Jesus, for he loved them and mercifully welcomed each one. To Jesus, the nobody was really somebody whom He could love, heal and save. Thank God for such mercy! Most of us are nobodies, but in Jesus' eyes we have value. Who would dare fail to respond to such a Master as He?

FACT QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the following words or phrases in the text:
 - a. holden
 - b. divers diseases
 - c. torments
 - d. demon possession
 - e. epileptic
 - f. palsied
2. What events are recorded in the parallel passages as having occurred just prior to this first general tour of Galilee?
3. According to the parallels, how did Jesus prepare Himself for this extensive evangelistic effort?
4. Of what value was the Jewish synagogue to the ministry of Jesus? What opportunities did it provide Him?
5. Tell something of the nature and use the Jews made of their synagogues.
6. What was the obvious purpose for which Jesus was sent, as revealed in this text and its parallels?
7. What effect did this evangelistic tour have upon the nation?
8. Locate the different areas whence people came to be healed by Jesus.