

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class # 17

1/31/22

Matthew 4

- The Selection of the First Apostles

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:12-13** *“Now when he heard that John had been arrested, ...in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali”*
 - Father pointed out that *Capernaum* was located at the very top of the Sea of Galilee (due north)
 - At this point, Jesus was at the very southern point of the Jordan River near the Dead Sea
 - Shortly after His baptism, Jesus moves his headquarters to *Capernaum* (the large city on the northern shore of the lake) rather than going back to Nazareth where He grew up
 - All that remains today are a few ruined buildings, including what is left of Peter’s house

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Churches have been constructed over the ruins of Peter's house since the time of the *Byzantines*
- It was a large, but relatively inexpensive house located right on the shore of the sea to allow quick access for a fisherman's boat (in that day, a house on the beach was not desirable)
- Thus, it became the headquarters for Jesus and His disciples, and *Capernaum* was once known as Jesus' city
- Because of the various churches constructed over the centuries at this location, it is among the top five known biblical locations in the Holy Land

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Today's church (according to father) is one of the ugliest Churches in Israel, as it was built directly over the ruins of Peter's house and looks like a landing pod
- Father said that perhaps someday it will be destroyed by an earthquake, and a proper church could be built at that site
- The main reason for discussing this church was to demonstrate where Jesus set up his Galilean headquarters

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:14-16** *“That what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:...and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned”*
 - Matthew obviously sees something impotent in the context of the **Prophet Isaiah**, as he had seen earlier concerning the virgin birth in **Isaiah 7:14-17**₁
 - *Isaiah* was a pre-exilic prophet, prophesying during the late 8th century BC and the early 7th century BC

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 9:1-2** ¹ *“But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish...those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has a light shined”*
 - Isaiah was speaking about the reign of *King Ahaz* (who at this point was dead), and *King Hezekiah* who was ascending to the throne of *Judah*
 - He gets a bit more energetic, and speaks with more vigor and says some nice things as *King Hezekiah* comes to the throne as the great final Messiah
 - Father pointed to the importance of our understanding what he was saying here as he fulfilled these prophetic words

KINGS OF JUDAH (SOUTHERN KINGDOM)

930-586 BC

No.	King	Date BC	Bad/ Good	Years Reigned	Relation to Predecessor	End of Reign	Scripture Reference
1	Rehoboam I	930-913	B	17	Son of Solomon	Died	1 Kg 11:42-14:31
2	Abijah	913-910	B	3	Son	Died	1 Kg 14:31-15:8
3	Asa	910-869	G	41	Son	Died	1 Kg 15:8-24
4	Jehoshaphat	872-848	G	25	Son	Died	1 Kg 22:41-55
5	Jehoram	848-841	B	8	Son	Stricken by God	2 Kg 8:16-24
6	Ahaziah	841	B	1	Son	Killed by Jehu	2 Kg 8:24-9:29
7	Athaliah	841-835	B	7	Mother	Killed by Army	2 Kg 11:1-20
8	Joash	835-796	G	40	Grandson	Killed by Servants	2 Kg 11:1-12:21
9	Amaziah	796-767	G	29	Son	Killed by Court	2 Kg 14:1-20
10	Uzziah	792-740	G	52	Son	Stricken by God	2 Kg 15:1-7
11	Jotham	750-732	G	16	Son	Died	2 Kg 15:32-38
12	Ahaz	735-715	B	16	Son	Died	2 Kg 16:1-20
13	Hezekiah	715-686	G	29	Son	Died	2 Kg 18:1-20:21
14	Manasseh	697-642	B	55	Son	Died	2 Kg 21:1-18
15	Amon	642-640	B	2	Son	Killed by Servants	2 Kg 21:19-26
16	Josiah	640-609	G	31	Son	Wounded in Battle	2 Kg 22:1-23:30
17	Johoahaz	609	B	3 Months	Son	Exiled to Egypt	2 Kg 23:31-33
18	Jehoiakim	609-598	B	11	Brother	Died in Seige	2 Kg 23:34-24:5
19	Jehoiachin	598-597	B	3 Months	Son	Exiled to Babylon	2 Kg 24:6-16
20	Zedekiah	597-586	B	11	Uncle	Exiled to Babylon	2 Kg 24:17-25:30

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- In the first couple of chapters, **Isaiah** demonstrates that all these texts are related and point to *King Hezekiah* who came to the throne as the first great king since the time of David
- According to the Jewish mindset, he was the only good king that have took the throne in Jerusalem since David
- Only one king after him (Josiah) was also good (read the **Book of Sirach 49:1-16**)₂
- According to Sirach, there were only three great kings: *David, Hezekiah, and Josiah*
- Father pointed out the problem for most Christians reading the New Testament is they know little or nothing about *King Hezekiah*

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- If we do not know about these three great kings, we are not going to understand the New Testament and the Jewish mindset, who are the people Matthew was writing to (the Jewish Christian mindset) who knew the Old Testament like the back of their hands
- Once again, we need to understand the Old Testament to understand the New Testament
- This is not as important for Mark because he explains much of this to his Gentile Christian audience
- One of the great things that *Hezekiah* did upon assuming the throne of David was (to the best of his ability) to cleanse Jerusalem of paganism

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- He was also able to briefly unite the North and South
- He sent letters to the leadership of the North inviting them to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (some of them came)
- Father pointed out that Josiah did the same thing to an ever greater extent
- Not only did he cleanse the land (in the south), he actually traveled to the North and cleansed much of that land of its paganism
- Further, he wrote letters to the remanent in the north saying: “you remnants of the people of God who are still there (in the north), are dwelling in the darkness, come to the light (in the south)

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- He also invited them to come for the Passover feast in Jerusalem (the only place it could be celebrated according to the Law of Moses)
- Many of them came
- In this passage, Matthew is showing us that, what *Hezekiah* and *Josiah* did in a shadowy image, is what **will ultimately be fulfilled by Jesus**
- We can see his actions reflected in **Isaiah 9:6-7** ¹

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Isaiah 9:6-7** *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;...and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore”*
 - Matthew is hoping his listeners will think of this passage when he tells us what Jesus was doing
 - He is demonstrating that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy from *Isaiah*
 - He is the mighty God, the ruler, the son of *David* who will establish the Kingdom of God
 - We should hear from *Isaiah* about the establishment of the Kingdom of *David*, the Kingdom of Israel

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:17** *“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*
 - Father pointed to the following two things
 - 1st we have already discussed the meaning of the “Kingdom of Heaven” (a circumlocution for the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of David)
 - But, can also see the relationship of a quote from the Old Testament to the New Testament
 - If we understand that the context of the great section in **Isaiah 9** concludes with a statement that the Kingdom of God is going to be established by His son
 - We then see (right after the quote in **Matthew 4**) that Jesus went and preached about that “kingdom”

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:18-21** “ *As he walked by the Sea of Galilee,...and he called them*”
 - Father talked about this site being one of the most beautiful spots in all of Galilee
 - Fresh water pours out of the side of a cliff forming a pool of fresh water in the Sea of Galilee
 - It is crystal clear for about 50 feet and filled with all sorts of fish
 - This makes it a great place for fishermen then and now
 - According to local Christians, it was the place where Jesus called Andrew and Peter to follow Him
 - It is located about 2 miles from *Capernaum*, which is about 5 miles from *Bethsaida*
 - *Gennesaret* was about 10 miles from *Capernaum*

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Father said that the land area in this region was wilderness
- We often hear about Jesus going to a lonely place to pray
- Once, a great crowd followed Him to a lonely place, where there was no source of food near by and the people would have had to travel to *Capernaum* or *Bethesda* to get some
- Even today, there are only a couple of small churches marking the sacred spots where Jesus did these things

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:22** *“Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him”*
 - Often, people believe that this was a moment when these disciples first encountered Jesus, had a mystical experience, dropped everything, and wandered off and followed Him
 - Father pointed out that this was not what happened
 - In the next few chapters, we will hear of Jesus and the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee in their boats
 - Later, we will hear of them fishing once again
 - It is obvious that they did not buy new boats and nets every time they went fishing

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Father said that what they did was reorder their lives, and turned their boats over to the service of Jesus
- Father reminded us that Jesus was a carpenter and not a fisherman, and that Jesus made His headquarters in Peter's house, by the sea, at *Capernaum*
- Peter's house became Jesus' house and his boat became Jesus' boat
- James and John's father *Zebedee*, and his mother *Salome* became a part of all of this
- Father pointed out that this passage is often misused on vocation retreats!

Mathew 4 (Cont)

- These often portray a calling as though the apostles suddenly met Christ, and instantly abandoned everything (family, friends, work) and followed Him
- Also, many read this as though Jesus was walking along the shore and these disciples who had never seen Jesus before, suddenly had a mystical experience and followed Him
- Father said that they did not abandon what they had, but reordered their lives to the ministry of Jesus
- And secondly, this was not their first encounter with Jesus, because they know who He was
- To get a better appreciation of this, let's look at **John 1:29-37₃**

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **John 1:29-37** *“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him,...and they followed Jesus”*
 - These two disciples were believed to be the youthful John, and his friend Andrew (the brother of Peter)
 - Both were disciples of John the Baptist
 - Most likely, they had been coming down from Galilee (where they lived and worked in the fishing industry) in shifts with their brothers (James and Peter)

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- They would then spend a few days with John the Baptist, who was baptizing the folks from Jerusalem and Judea in the Jordan River near the Dead Sea
- But, they could not stay too long as they had families to feed in *Galilee*

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **John 1:41-44** “*He (Andrew) first found his brother Simon, ...Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter*”
 - Father pointed out that *Bethsaida* was a small town in the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, a few miles east of *Capernaum*
 - The encounter with Jesus occurred a few days earlier, after John the Baptist told John and Andrew that Jesus was the man he had been discussing earlier, whose sandals he was not worthy of unfastening
 - The two disciples begin to follow Jesus, although they had not as of this time been called by Jesus to be a follower (this will happen in **John 1:43**)
 - They then returned to Galilee and told their brothers about their encounter with Jesus

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Father was making the point that the disciples did not follow Jesus immediately (They waited until they were called)
- According to Rabbinic tradition, a man was not a disciple of a rabbi until he was called by that rabbi
- Enrollment was a part of the process (Rabbi means teacher; Disciple means student)
- This means that these men followed Jesus around for a while, then returned to their fishing business in Galilee, and when Jesus meets them a second time, He called them to be His disciples

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- At that point, they were convinced that He was the Messiah, so when He called them they were ready to follow Him
- James and John's father, *Zebedee*, and their mother *Salome*, were most likely very supportive of their son's decision to follow John the Baptist and later, Jesus
- Once again, Father discussed how this passage is often misused in vocation retreats
- This was not a spontaneous response to a calling
- Vocations today come from Christian families in which young men are gradually exposed to a calling with the support of their relatives

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:23** *“And he went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people”*
 - Remember that the “Good News” is a victory proclamation
 - This should remind us that “God reigns”
 - We are talking about the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Israel, that they have been waiting for, for over 500 years

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- Jesus did not establish this kingdom, like the Maccabees did, with the sword
- He did it by healing diseases and infirmities among the people

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- **Matthew 4:24-25** *So his fame spread throughout all Syria,...and Jerusalem, and Judea and from beyond the Jordan”*
 - *Syria* was the northern most region in the area
 - Jesus was headquartered in *Capernaum*, located at the northernmost point on the Sea of Galilee
 - This means that His fame spread even as far as *Syria* in the north
 - Decapolis was on the Easter side of the Sea of *Galilee*

Matthew 4 (Cont)

- The entire area was beginning to come to Jesus to be healed and listen to His message
- Some believed that Jesus' mission or purpose was to heal the sick, and raise paralytics, and cast out demons
- But, Father pointed out, that if this was the case, He did not do a very good job as He only did these things for a few people
- Sometimes we hear people say that Jesus came only to die for us
- Father said that His mission was to train His followers (Apostles and disciples) to implement and carry on His Kingdom (the Church)

Matthew (Cont)

- Looking at what the Apostles went through, it was a sort of “boot camp”
- Jesus trained them how to baptize and proclaim the Good News
- Father asked why Jesus spent so much time with just 12 guys?
- Wouldn't it have been better if He focused on 100 or 1000 guys? (not a very good business model)
- He was not running a business, He was training His Apostles to be able to watch and pray, and to learn how to deal with the life situations of their ministry
- After three years of training they were ready to do what was needed to be done!