

The Legacy of John and the Light of the Savior

Matthew 4:12-17: ¹² Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; ¹³ And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: ¹⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; ¹⁶ The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

I. Verse 12—"Now when Jesus heard that John"

- A. The three victories of the Lord saying, "No" three times was so significant. With those three rejection, the Lord was rejecting all that the world has to offer.
- B. This made the Lord qualified to preach the Gospel.
- C. The devil seeks to disqualify a person by having him fall before a temptation in one of these three areas.
 1. What happens when a preacher falls into sexual temptation?
 - a. He becomes disqualified to preach because he yielded to the lust of the flesh.
 2. What happens when a preacher falls into covetousness and becomes materialistic?
 - a. He becomes disqualified to preach because he yielded to the lust of the eyes.
 3. What happens when a preacher falls into becoming proud and no longer has time for the "little people in his congregation?"
 - a. He becomes disqualified to preach because he yielded to the pride of life.
- D. Verse 1 told us that *"Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."*
 1. It was the Spirit leading the Lord to prove that He was qualified to preach because the Lord would not yield in any of those areas that make up all that the world has to offer to attract a person.
 2. The Lord fought and won on every front that the world attacked Him with temptations.
- E. Before we can be used by God, we have to follow the Lord and renounce and conquer in all these of these areas—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes or covetousness and the pride of life.
 1. This is what the Lord did in order to prepare for His public ministry. That is the significance of the word "Now" in verse 12.
 - a. The word "Now" in verse 12 is telling us that the Lord has renounced and conquered the world in those three vital areas.
 - b. Now, He is prepared to go into the world to save souls without the world defeating Him.
- F. When you and I make that decision to want to be used by God, we can expect the devil to come in with all that the world has to offer us.
 1. The temptation to "Just do it" and indulge in a little flesh satisfaction will seem like the thing to do to get that "feel good feeling."
 2. When you and I decided to go into the world and preach the Gospel, the world will never look more attractive to us to indulge for that feel good feeling of the flesh.
 3. Things will never look as attractive to us as they have in the past to where we will be tempted to covet.
 4. We will really want to be accepted by others, and we will thirst for others to praise us in a life of pride.
- G. If we are going to be used by God, we will have to overcome in these three areas just like the Lord did.

II. Verse 12—"Jesus heard...John was cast into prison"

- A. We are told in verse 12 that the Lord left Nazareth where He was brought up to go into Galilee to preach.
- B. He did that when He heard that John was cast into prison.
- C. Chronologically speaking, there were other events in the history of the Lord that took place that happened before the Lord went into Galilee.
 1. We know from the other Gospels that before the Lord went into Galilee, He attended a wedding in Cana where He turned the water into wine.
 2. We also know that before the Lord went into Galilee, He probably met a Samaritan woman at a well. He told her that she could have a taste of water that truly satisfies.
 3. Before the Lord went into Galilee, there was a prominent teacher of the Pharisees named Nicodemus who came to the Lord night with a hidden question of how he could go to Heaven. The Lord told him that he needed to be born again and how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
- D. These all happened before the Lord went into Galilee, and they are not recorded in Matthew.
 1. The Book of Matthew is not written to give us a chronological report of what happened in the life of the Lord.
 2. This Gospel is laser-focused on giving accounts that lead a person to make a decision to believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. This is true of the Bible in general. God has chosen events to record that will lead the readers to put their trust in God.

4. For example, the passage we are studying now is telling us that the Lord Jesus went into a land of darkness and the shadow of death as the Light of the World.
 - a. That is being told to us so that we will trust the Lord Jesus to come into the darkness of our hearts and give us Light.
- E. This selective reporting of events for the purpose of leading the readers to a response is told us outright by the author of the Book of John. John said what his goal was in writing the Gospel of John in the following verses:
 1. **John 21:25**—*“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”*
 2. **John 20:30-31**—*“³⁰ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹ But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”*
- F. What John was saying was, “Don’t look at my Gospel for a comprehensive biography of the life of the Lord. My purpose is to select those events that will cause the readers to make two essential decisions—to decide to believe that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God and to decide to believe personally trust that Jesus is the Son of God.
- G. That was John’s goal, and that is Matthew’s goal.
- H. That is God’s goal for the whole Bible. The Lord Jesus showed the Sadducees how to look at the Bible to resolve their problem of not believing that there is life after death in **Matthew 22:29-32**.
 1. **Matthew 22:29-32** says, *“²⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, **Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.** ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was **spoken unto you by God**, saying, ³² I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”*
- I. Those Sadducees came to the Lord stating that there was no life after death.
- J. The Lord told them what their problem was when He said in **Matthew 22:29**.
 1. **Matthew 22:29** says, *“Jesus answered and said unto them, **Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.**”*
 2. When He said, “Ye do err,” He was telling them that they went astray.
 3. Then, He told them why they went astray when He said that they were *“not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”*
 4. What did He mean when He said that? Did He mean that they were ignorant of the passage in Exodus when God spoke from the burning bush to Moses and said that He was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob?
 5. Did He mean that they fell asleep when the teacher was teaching them that passage in Exodus or that they forgot what they read?
 6. What did He mean when He said their problem was “not knowing the Scriptures?”
 7. How did that have anything to do with the power of God when He said that they did not know the power of God?
- K. The key to seeing what the Lord Jesus meant when He said that they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God is tied up in two words in **Matthew 22:31**.
 1. The verse says, *“But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was **spoken unto you by God.**”*
 2. The two words are “unto you.”
- L. Can’t you imagine the Sadducees saying, “unto us?” “What do you mean that the Book of Exodus was written unto us? Exodus is just an historical book recounting what happened. Why is it ‘unto us?’”
- M. To know the Scriptures is to know that this is a Book that is written unto us.
- N. Just as Matthew and John are making selections of what to report to persuade us to put our trust in God, the whole Bible is written to us just as it was written to the Sadducees.
 1. To know the Scriptures is not referring to knowing every chapter and verse in the Bible.
 2. When the Lord Jesus spoke there about knowing the Scriptures, He was not talking about becoming “The Bible Answer Man.” He was referring to knowing that all of the Bible is written to us.
- O. When a person says, “How can that possibly be? How can the Bible be written to me?”
 1. The answer is “The power of God.”
 2. That is what the Lord meant when He said, “You know not the Scriptures nor the power of God.”
 - a. He meant, “You know not that the Scriptures are written to you, and you do not know that the power of God is how the Scriptures are written to you.”
 3. When we read the Bible, we should read it with the attitude of, “What is that, Lord? What are you are saying to me from that passage? What response are you looking for from me from that passage I just read?”

- P. Don't look at Matthew for a biographical, continuous narrative of what happened next; look at Matthew as reported events that were selected by God for the purpose of leading us both to will and do of God's good pleasure.

III. Verse 12—*"Jesus heard...John...cast...he departed"*

- A. There were specific details surrounding the reason Herod cast John into prison that had to do with John telling Herod that it was wrong for him to marry his sister-in-law.
- B. All those details are omitted here, and they will be presented later in chapter 14.
1. Those details would only get in the way of us being led to come to conclusions. Verse 12 simply reads, *"When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee."*
 2. Here, the reason John was cast into prison is **not** important.
 3. What is important is that when John was cast into prison that the Lord took that as a signal to go to Galilee and start to preach.
- C. John was recognized as a great prophet here. This is what the Pharisees knew about John in **Matthew 21:25-26**.
1. The verses say, *"²⁵ The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?²⁶ But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet."*
- D. John was seen by the people as a great prophet that all Israel went out into the wilderness to hear John.
1. When John was cast into prison, that was a real "Oh no! Not John!" moment for the people.
 2. The people had come to value John the Baptist, and so it was a time of, "What are we going to do now without John the Baptist? We need John the Baptist."
- E. When John the Baptist leaves the work, the Lord Jesus appears to take up the work that John left.
1. God does not leave Himself without a witness—just like Paul told the Gentiles how God did not leave Himself without a witness in **Acts 14:17**.
 - a. **Acts 14:17** says, *"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."*
- F. When John the Baptist was removed from the people, it was like when Moses died.
1. Here were millions of Jewish people who followed their leader, Moses out of Egypt, and the people had not come into the land of Canaan yet when Moses died.
- G. We can imagine the people saying to Moses, "You can't die. We need you. We are not yet in the land of Canaan yet."
1. Then, Moses took that walk with God up the mountain, and the people lost sight of Moses. Moses died up there and did not come back.
 2. Just when the people thought that God did not have another person to lead them, God called Joshua and said to him in Joshua 1:1-2.
 - a. **Joshua 1:1-2** says, *"¹ Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, ² Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."²*
 3. God said to Joshua, "Moses is dead, and now, it is your turn to go onto the field in the place of Moses."
 4. God encouraged Joshua to not look at Moses, but to look at the God of Moses.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 31:23** states, *"And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee."*

IV. Verse 12—*"John was cast into prison"*

- A. When John was cast into prison, that was the end of John's ministry.
- B. We think in our lives that the work we are doing for the Lord will never end, but the words of verse 12 are important.
1. Verse 12 says, *"John was cast into prison."*
- C. We realize that disability and death comes to everyone, but we push out of our mind that it will come to us.
- D. We have a limited time to do the work God has given us to do.
1. That reminds me of the history that the Lord Jesus told to His disciples in **Luke 16:1-2**.
 - a. **Luke 16:1-2** says, *"And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.¹ And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."²*
 2. Here was this steward, and he had responsibility over the business of a rich man. Because he was accused, the rich man called him in and demanded that he give an account of what happened.
 3. Then, the steward heard the most terrifying words he had ever heard which was *"Thou mayest be no longer steward."*

4. We can imagine the steward thinking to himself, "But, I thought I would always be the steward."
- E. Each one of us is like that steward.
 1. God has given us work and responsibilities to do, and God has told us that we are the steward over what He has given to us.
 - a. It may be to teach a Sunday School or to visit the sick or to bring people to church.
 2. That is what God has made us a steward over.
- F. When we read in verse 12 how John was cast into prison and realize that that was the end of John's ministry, we look back over the whole of John's life and ask the question, "So, how did John do in his life?" There is one verse that is a comment on John's life, and it is **Acts 13:25**.
 1. **Acts 13:25** says, "*And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.*"
- G. That is the evaluation of John's life in **Acts 13:25**. The verse tells us that John fulfilled his course.
 1. John had a course in his life, and John could have either fulfilled his course or not fulfilled his course.
 2. John had a specific goal to accomplish in his life, and John accomplished that goal.
 3. It is just like the Lord Jesus had a specific goal in life to accomplish on earth.
 - a. That is what makes the last word of the Lord Jesus on the cross so important when He cried out, "Finished." The Hebrew word "Asa" means accomplished. The Lord Jesus is crying out, "I accomplished my course. I fulfilled my course."
 4. The Lord Jesus lived His life on earth knowing that one day he would no longer be steward of healing in person and preaching in person and forgiving sins in person on earth.
 5. Those were the works that He knew He had a limited time to accomplish when He said in **John 9:4**.
 - a. **John 9:4** states, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*"
- H. In order for John to have accomplished his course, John had to discover what course God had assigned to him that he had to accomplish on earth.
 1. In order for us to accomplish our course in life, we have to each discover what course God has given to us to accomplish on earth.
- I. In order for John to have been crowned with the words, "*John fulfilled his course,*" John had to persevere to stay focused on fulfilling his life course.
 1. It is not enough to just have discovered what life work God has assigned to us. We have to persevere to not get side tracked and to stay on course.
- J. The life work of the Lord Jesus that He accomplished was **Hebrews 2:10**.
 1. **Hebrews 2:10** says, "*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*"
 2. By His sinless life, He proved that He was the Lamb of God without blemish.
 3. In His life on earth, He rescued man.
 - a. **Luke 7:22** states, "*Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.*"
 4. In His death, He became the atoning sacrifice that opened Heaven's doors for repenting sinners.
- K. The Lord fulfilled His course when He said on the cross, "It is accomplished."
- L. John the Baptist fulfilled his course when he said in **John 1:29**, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"
 1. The life work of John the Baptist was to prepare the people to meet the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
 2. John prepared the people by making them aware that they had sin that needed to be taken away.
 3. John's course or purpose in life was to make the people aware of their sins.
 4. John brought people to repentance.
 5. John the Baptist brought people to tears over their sin.
 6. The lines that formed to hear John the Baptists were lines of crying people who were crying over their sins.
 7. John lost his life trying to bring Herod to repentance over his sin of marrying his sister-in-law.
- M. No one is prepared to have the Lamb of God take away his sins unless he is acutely aware of his sins.
 1. If a person sees their sins as simply "mistakes in life" or "sins just like anyone else has sins," that person is not prepared to have the Lamb of God take away his sins.
 2. **John 1:29** does not say, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the mistakes of the world.*"
 3. **John 1:29** does not say, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins no worse than anyone else's sins.*"
- N. The Lamb of God takes away a person's sins only after that person has seen the awfulness of his own sins and sees his sins as David saw his sins after he raped a husband's wife and then murdered the husband.

1. **Psalm 51:3-5** says, *“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.³ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.⁴ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.⁵”*
 - O. When David said in **Psalm 51:5**, *“I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”*
 1. David was saying that he was dirty and rotten from birth. That is what real repentance looks like.
- V. Verse 13—*“And leaving Nazareth”*
 - A. The Lord Jesus leaves His home town of Nazareth and heads into Galilee to a city called Capernaum.
 1. Capernaum is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was probably built after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity.
 - B. When He left Nazareth, the Lord Jesus did not go to Jerusalem—the center of Jewish religious life. He went to Galilee.
 - C. We know that the Lord Jesus was not received in His home town of Nazareth.
 1. **Matthew 13:54-58** says, *“⁵⁴ And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?⁵⁶ And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?⁵⁷ And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.⁵⁸ And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”*
 - D. That was what happened in His home town of Nazareth. They lost out.
 - E. He went to Capernaum which is described as on the sea coast, but, this is not the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, but the coast of the sea of Galilee.
 - F. He lived for a while along the borders of the region that was given by Joshua to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.
- VI. Verse 14—*“That it might be fulfilled...the prophet”*
 - A. When He made this move to Galilee, it was a fulfillment of **Isaiah 9:1-2**.
 1. **Isaiah 9:1-2** says, *“¹ Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”*
 - B. This passage in the first two verses of **Isaiah 9** describe a darkness over the people of Galilee.
 - C. First, in verse 15, this area is called *“by the way of the sea.”*
 1. This is referring to the fact that this was an important trade route that went along the sea.
 2. This meant that there were merchants passing through, and that made Galilee not a poor town. Galilee was a place of business.
 3. With all its wealth and business, it was still a place of darkness and depression.
 - D. In verse 15, we see that it was called *“Galilee of the Gentiles.”*
 1. This meant that in Galilee, the Jews were living among Gentiles. This was different from Jerusalem and Judea where there were not Gentiles living among the Jews.
 2. Here in Galilee, there were Gentiles living among the Jews, and those Gentiles had brought in their idols and false gods.
 - E. The fact that the Lord Jesus went to a place that was inhabited by both Jews and Gentiles is a little foretaste of how the Gospel was later going to be brought to the Gentiles.
- VII. Verse 16—*“The people which sat in darkness”*
 - A. For all their wealth and commerce, the people of Galilee are described in verse 16 as *“the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”*
 - B. What a depressing description is people sitting in darkness and in the region and shadow of death!
 - C. There is a slight difference between this description in verse 16 and the actual verse in **Isaiah 9**.
 1. In verse 16, it says that *“the people which sat in darkness.”*
 2. In **Isaiah 9:2**, it says, *“The people which walked in darkness.”*
 - D. In **Isaiah 9:2**, the people are walking in darkness. In **Matthew 4:16**, the people are sitting in darkness.
 - E. That shows us that the condition of the people has become worse. They have gone from walking in darkness to sitting in darkness. They are now in a state of depression.
 - F. Anyone without the Lord Jesus Christ is in a state of darkness
 1. **Matthew 6:23** states, *“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”*
 2. The problem with being in great darkness is that it is also being in great danger.
 3. That is the danger of dying in their sins and being cast forever into a state of unending pain and suffering in hell.
 - G. The darkness is called *“the region and shadow of death.”*

1. When you are sitting down and someone approaches you from behind, you don't see that person. You just see his shadow.
 2. All you know is that the person will arrive, but you don't know when. You only see his shadow.
 3. That is how this people are described. Isn't that a description of the life without the Lord Jesus Christ?
 - a. At first, in life, there is energy and youth and strength. There is no knowledge of God and of His Christ.
 - b. There is the exhilaration of work that needs to be done.
 - c. That is all because there is an active mind to see and plan. There is a strong body to do.
 4. There is a transition from walking to sitting and seeing that shadow that is cast by death that is behind.
 - a. That is the description of the state of anyone who is without the Lord, and that is the description of anyone who is without the Lord Jesus.
- H. This is the people that the Lord Jesus came to. His coming to them is described in verse 16.
1. Verse 16 says, "*Light is sprung up.*"
- I. Out of nowhere, the Lord Jesus comes as a great light just as He is described in **Malachi 4:2**.
1. **Malachi 4:2** says, "*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*"
- J. For this people, the light did not gradually just come. It sprang up. It was like being in a dark room and turning on a bright light. It was dazzling for the people.
- K. It was not just a light that sprung up, but in verse 16, the coming of the Lord Jesus is described as a "great light" By coming to this people, it was like they saw the light of day—the morning light.