

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Light Dawns, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-13

Code: 2193

Matthew chapter 4, we are continuing a study in the Gospel of Matthew; and in this section, we find the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew 4:12 reads, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the Seacoast in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people who sat in darkness saw a great Light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow and death, Light is sprung up.' From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'"

Now, one of my favorite glimpses of the incomparable majesty of Jesus Christ is His character revealed as Light; and you will notice that in verse 16, we see that "the people who sat in darkness saw great Light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light is sprung up." It is a favorite designation of the writers of Scripture to view Jesus Christ as Light. Lemme illustrate that to you by, particularly, having you notice the Gospel of John. A favorite metaphor that John uses, a favorite picture of Jesus Christ is the concept of light; and in John we find it right away in the 1st chapter verse 5. "And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness overcame it not." Verse 7, "The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which lighted every man that cometh into the world."

In the 3rd chapter of John's Gospel in the 19th verse, "And this is the condemnation: that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." In chapter 9 of John's Gospel, again, John calls on the same picture. This time the very words of Jesus, "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." In John chapter 12, again, in verse 35, "Then Jesus said unto them, 'Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth. While ye have Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the sons of Light.'" Same chapter verse 46, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness."

John then selects those times and those places when Jesus called Himself the Light. I think the most graphic of all is in John 8. Back up the 8th chapter and the 12th verse. In John chapter 8 and verse 12 we read, "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'" This was a tremendous statement. The place where the statement was made is indicated in verse 20 of chapter 8. "These words spoke Jesus in the treasury." The temple treasury was the court of the women, the outer court of the temple; and the time of the year was just at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles; and during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the people of Israel commemorated what they called the illumination of the temple. They put in the middle of the temple a massive series of candelabras, and every night and all night long, they lit them so that right out of the middle of the court of the women in the temple came streaming this massive light all night long; and they did it for a week. It was to commemorate the cloud of light, the pillar of fire that led them in their wilderness wanderings. This was the commemoration of the great Light that had led them in the exodus. And, as Jesus enters the court of the women, the light is out. The Feast of Tabernacles is over, but the remnant is still there. All the candelabra apparatus sits there. It's there, but there's nothing lit, and Jesus walks in in the midst of that scene and captures the moment for Himself. All the people are very aware of this great Light that has been going on in Jerusalem for the seven days prior. They're all aware of this, and Jesus steps up into the midst of the moment and says, "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of light."

In other words, He captures the scene for Himself. He was a master at doing this. He is the Light. The Bible tells us that man is in darkness. It tells us that repeatedly. It tells us that from one end of the Scripture to the other, that man is engulfed in darkness. It is part of man's pattern. According to Proverbs 2:13, "to walk in the ways of darkness." That is man's approach to life. He cannot know. He cannot see the Light.

In chapter 4 of Proverbs in verse 19, it says, "The way of the wicked is like darkness. They know not at what they stumble." But verse 18 says, "The path of the just is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. So sinful men, the society of the world is pictured as walking in darkness.

Now, we're looking at Matthew, and that picture of the darkness of society is in Matthew. In Matthew 6:23 it says, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" He talks about the whole body being filled with darkness. In the 22nd chapter of Luke and the 53rd verse, I think it is. Yes, "When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." And here Christ recognizes that the power behind His crucifixion, the power behind His arrest, the power behind the antagonism, is the power of darkness. The power of Satan himself.

The Apostle Paul sees the same thing in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 6. He says, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness that's shown in our hearts." In Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 11, the Bible says are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. In Ephesians 6 verse 12, "We wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world. The spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." Even Peter talks about it in 1 Peter 2:9 when he says, "God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Paul writes to the Colossians that we've been called out of the kingdom of darkness, as it were, into the kingdom of His dear Son. So the world is seen in darkness, moral darkness, spiritual darkness, ignorance, the un...inability to know God. The inability to know truth. The inability to change its behavior to that which is right. That's the kind of darkness that the world is engulfed in.

Say, "Well, doesn't God give man a little light?" Yes, you might say that God has given to man two little candles. One is the candle of creation, and the other is a candle of conscience. But before very long, man blows them out; and then he's in total darkness. According to chapter 1 of Romans, look at this and verse 19. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in man, for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of the Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." That is creation. There is that little candle of creation that is enough light to see God...and there is that which is within them, that little candle of conscience, which is enough to see God, so that at the end of verse 20, he says, "They are without excuse."

But verse 21 says, "Because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was...what?...darkened." Man, in his sinfulness, extinguishes the only two faint lights that he has to give him any sense of where God is, any sense of where right and wrong are, any sense of truth. He blows out the only hope that he has by the willful sin in his life.

I had this illustrated to me very graphically this week as I was reading an article in the latest edition of Inspiration Magazine written by Phil Yancey on the subject of pain. He tells in that article about Dr. Paul Brand. Dr. Paul Brand is a researcher of Hanson's disease. Hanson's disease is the name that we have modern...we modern-day people have given to the ancient disease called leprosy. For short, it's called HD, Hanson's disease. Now this man, Dr. Paul Brand, has done research on leprosy or Hanson's disease all over the world from Carville, Louisiana, where the United States Public Health Service has the most famous leprosarium in the northern continent, all the way to India, where he has conducted experiments in leprosy places there.

After years of research, he has concluded that leprosy is not a disease that causes decay. Leprosy is a disease that is an anesthetic, and what he means is this. For thousands of years, people thought that leprosy caused the ulceration of the hands and the feet and the ears and the nose and all the

extremities, so that, eventually, the flesh rotted away and the limbs rotted away and deteriorated, and you've been exposed to that kind of thinking.

Through Brand's research, it has been established that, in 99 percent of the cases, leprosy only numbs the extremities. It causes no kind of decay at all. It only numbs them, and the destruction follows, because people cannot feel with their extremities, and they do not know what they're doing to their own flesh. For example, he saw in the surveys that he was doing in India that people who had this disease would drop something in a fire. They would reach right in to take it out, because they couldn't feel any pain. That workmen who worked with a shovel for an entire day would work with the shovel that had splinters and nails, and they would rip and tear their flesh; but, because they had no sensation, they wouldn't feel anything. When he was in India, he couldn't open a particular lock in a door; and he... he was having a very difficult time turning the key in a rusty lock; and a young boy came over who had this disease. He took ahold of the key and turned it, ripped the flesh right through to the bone and never felt a thing.

So the conclusion came after years of study that Hanson's disease or leprosy is simply an anesthetic disease that numbs the extremities and removes the feeling that needs to be there to protect you from destroying yourself. Now the case of a man in the Carville hospital who had this terrible disease in his feet, and eventually he wore his toes away thinking all the while that the disease was doing it, only to find out that with the shoes that he was wearing, they were doing it; but he couldn't feel them doing it.

The U.S. Public Health Service operates that hospital. The most famous patient there, a man named Stanley Stein, has written a book called No Longer Alone; and Stanley Stein is blind; and the reason he is blind is because of a strange quirk of this disease. His face is numb, and his hands are numb; and it was his habit for years to wash his face every morning with hot...a hot washcloth; but because he was unable to know how hot the washcloth was, he eventually burned his eyes out...because neither his face nor his hands were able to respond to the heat; and now Stanley Stein is in total darkness.

I couldn't help but think of a parallel. That's not unlike the disease of sin. The disease of sin has a way, because of its numbing effect, of allowing man to blind himself without even knowing he's doing it. Sin has a way of destroying man's spiritual sensitivity. It has a way of numbing him so that he puts his face into things that he doesn't realize are gonna burn out the very thing that God has given him to reveal who God is; and man literally burns away his own spiritual sensitivity because sin numbs him. So the numbing of sin has had its effect. It has blown out the two small candles of creation and conscience, and man is left in darkness. That's the way it is with man...but John tells us and Matthew tells us and many other Bible writers tell us that into the darkness of the world and into the darkness of man's situation comes the Light Jesus Christ; and His Light is so blazing; it is so iridescent; it is so powerful that it penetrates the blackest of blackness, the darkest of darkness. That's the message

that the Apostle John, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter wanted to give us in the Scripture we looked at; and that is also the message of Matthew chapter 4. Let's look back at it.

Jesus is the day star. Jesus is the bright and morning star. Jesus is the One of whom Malachi said, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams." And the sun there is spelled S U N, and that is the great reality of this tremendous text in Matthew. Look again at verse 16, "The people who sat in darkness saw a great Light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light is sprung up." You see, Matthew sees the darkness of man, and he calls the Light of Jesus Christ to bear upon the darkness of man, and here he's really quoting the great prophet Isaiah, as we shall see in a few moments. This is how Matthew introduces the ministry of Jesus. It is the light dawning on the darkness. Now, remember, Matthew is presenting Jesus as King over and over again.

Lemme give you a quick review. First of all, in Matthew's Gospel, we saw the ancestry of the King in His genealogy. Then we saw the arrival of the King in His birth. Then we saw the adoration of the King, as the magi came to worship. Then we saw the anticipations of the King as He fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies; and then we saw the announcer of the King, John the Baptist. Then we saw the affirmation of the King in His baptism. "This is My...what?...beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And in our last study, we saw the advantage of the King in His temptation -- how He won over Satan and took the victory and won the advantage.

And now we come to the activity of the King. The activity of the King. The beginning of His great ministry. Now look at verse 11. "Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Now that ends the temptation. The great victory of Christ. The King is established as a King. He has been tested. The greatest monarch in existence in the world apart from God has put Him to the test. That monarch is Satan, the prince of this world, the king of darkness; and he has been beaten. Christ is the supreme King. Having proven Himself, He embarks upon His ministry.

Matthew picks that up then in verse 12. "He departed into Galilee," and that's where it really, officially begins. Now, lemme add this. Between verse 12 and 11, between those two verses, there is a time interval of about one year. Now stay with me. We're gonna get into some history here. You're gonna find it fascinating...

There is a time interval between verses 11 and 12 that takes up about one year. Now we know what happened in that time interval. You know why? It's all recorded for us. From the time of the temptation till the beginning of the Galilean ministry, we have a full record of what happened, and it's in John chapter 1 verses 19 through chapter 4 verse 42. Let's look at it.

Now Matthew doesn't deal with these things, because Matthew has a specific purpose to present Christ as King. John touches on this that happened prior to that time. Now lemme fill you in on the

gaps. Look at John 1. Jesus has just won the victory over Satan. He's been 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. He's gained the victory. Following that tremendous victory in the wilderness, Jesus comes back to where John the Baptist is preaching and baptizing. He shows up there again, and He has a purpose. He wants, now that everything is ready, He's been baptized. He's been tested. He's been proven. He's ready to start His ministry. He wants John, once and for all in a great final statement, to point to Him as the Messiah. He wants to give John a final great declaration of who He is, and that is precisely what happens in chapter 1 verse 19, "And this is the witness of John."

It was important for the Jews that John point specifically to this person, Jesus, and say, "This is the Messiah. This is the One I've been preaching about. This is the One who is the King with the Kingdom." And so following His temptation, He comes back, lingering in the area where John was baptizing. Now, He only lingered three days...

The first day, in verse 26, He comes back. He is present. John is preaching. "John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there standeth One among you whom ye know not.'" You know what John was saying on day one? John was saying, "He's here. He is here. He has arrived. He's standing among you. You don't know Him, but He's here, and He is One who baptizes differently than I, who comes after me, yet is preferred before me, whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to loose. He is here," says John on day one. "The Messiah is here."

Day two, verse 29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming toward him." He's not just standing in the crowd. He's moving toward John, and He says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me cometh a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And in verse 34, he sums up day two testimony, "And I saw and bore witness that this is the Son of God."

First day, "He is here." Second day, John says, "Behold Him. Behold Him. See Him. That's who He is." And he points to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God. There was a third day, verse 35. "Again the next day John stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked away...the best rendering...He looked to Jesus as He walked away." First day He stood in the crowd. Second day He came out of the crowd and stood with John, and John said, "This is Him." And now He's walking away. Day three.

Look at verse 36, "'Behold the Lamb of God!' And the two disciples heard him speak, and they did...what?...they followed Jesus." Day one John says, "He's here." Day two he says, "Behold Him." Day three he says, "Follow Him. Follow Him." In effect, that's what he was saying; and so Jesus lingered after His temptation for three days so that the testimony of John, the witness of John as chapter 1:19 says, could be completed, and then He walked away. And John said to his own disciples, "You go after Him. You follow Him." Jesus was making the transition from the days of the Old Testament to the new, from John the Baptist to Himself; and so Jesus walked away; and they

followed him. And you know what? He called them to be His disciples.

From verses 38 to 51 of John 1, Jesus calls the first group of disciples. Andrew, and another one who isn't named, and take a wild guess who that might be. John, and Peter and Philip and who was the last one? Nathaniel. He gathers the first group, makes the first call. Now what did He do from there? Oh, He went to a wedding. John chapter 2 verses 1 to 11 tells us that He went to Cana of Galilee. You remember it there? And He made what? Water into wine. Wonderful time it was; and after He had finished the miracle of Cana where He had made water into wine, and, by the way, Cana is way up north in Galilee, so He...He went all the way from where John was baptizing in the Jordan down by Jericho, down in the desert, all the way up the plateau, all the way across the hilltops, all the way onto the other side of the western side of those hills, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, to the little town of Cana to the wedding. And after He had been there for a while, verse 12 says, "After He went down... after this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brethren and His disciples; and they continued there just a few days."

From Cana of Galilee, you'd have to walk another ten miles at least up the western edge of the Sea of Galilee around to the northern tip to the little town of Capernaum, and He spent a few days there. So He's done a lotta walking, taken a lotta time. From the Jordan to Cana to Capernaum, and, from there, verse 13. "The Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." You always go up to Jerusalem, 'cause it's on a high plateau; and He went to Jerusalem; and you remember what He did when He got there? Zechariah the prophet said that the Messiah would suddenly come to his temple. Remember that? And as soon as He got to town, He went into the temple, made a whip, and cleaned it out; and that was His official presentation of Himself.

John the Baptist said, "He's here. Behold Him. Follow Him." The announcement was clear. They knew who He was, and He walked right in and presented Himself and took the authority to clean the place up...And so from chapter 2 verse 13 to the end of the chapter, He cleanses the temple. This is His initial and official presentation of Himself to the Jewish leaders and rulers.

Well, you know, they weren't too thrilled, frankly. They weren't too thrilled that He cleaned up their temple; but, apparently, there was one of them that was. What was his name? Chapter 3, Nicodemus; because, by night, Nicodemus, the Greek says, "Who was the teacher of Israel," came to ask Jesus some questions; and He had a wonderful conversation with Nicodemus about being born again.

After that, verse 22, "Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with 'em, and baptized. And John also was baptizing." Isn't that interesting? John and Jesus simultaneously preaching and baptizing. The transition isn't over yet. There's still a little overlap. John is still gathering people to himself, transmitting them to Jesus, little by little; and both are working side by side. It's a time of transition...and John kept on baptizing until verse 24 says, "He

was not yet cast into prison." He continued his ministry till he was thrown in prison. In fact, that's the way God stopped his ministry. He was such a hardboiled, blunt, bold, aggressive kind of a preacher that I don't know what woulda stopped him. Maybe God knew nothing would stop him, so He had to put him in jail to phase him out. The instant phase out - you're under arrest. It's all over...but until that time, they worked together.

John had done his work. He had heralded the King. He had pointed Him out. He had told the people to follow Him. Jesus had come to Jerusalem, proclaimed Himself. He'd come to His temple. He cleansed His temple. He'd gone to Cana. He'd done a miracle to establish who He was, and then He rested a little while in Capernaum. He came back to the...to be with His disciples, continued His ministry while John continued to preach, but now it was time for Him to begin His work. It was time for John to phase out and Jesus to phase in, and Jesus knew He had to go to Galilee to start, so we come to chapter 4; but before that, at the end of chapter 3, John gives us the great phase out; and John says in verse 30, "He must...what?...increase, and I must decrease." He says, "It's the end of me and the beginning of Him," and Jesus takes over in chapter 4.

"When the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again into Galilee, and he must needs go through Samaria." Now watch. Jesus will begin His official ministry in Galilee. He has...He has made His presentation in Jerusalem. He has gathered together His disciples in part. He has done a miracle to establish in their minds and, by the way, the miracle at Cana was for the disciples' benefit -- to prove to them that He was the Messiah. It was for them that He did it, as were many and most of His miracles. He had affirmed it in their minds; and now He had gone back to wait until God's proper time to phase out John and phase His ministry in; and when it came time for that to happen, John was taken to prison, and Jesus moved to Galilee.

And on His way to Galilee, He ran across an interesting lady, didn't he? In the fourth chapter, He met a woman at the well. She was the most despised of all people by the Jews. She was a Samaritan. That's a half-breed, half-Jew, half-Gentile. Anybody they thought that would corrupt their pure Judaism by marrying a Gentile was the worst of all people. It was such a sanctimonious thing to be Jewish, that to intermarry with a Gentile was the most heinous crime a Jew could commit; and so they looked down on these Samaritans and despised 'em; and yet it was to this woman that Jesus declared Himself to be the Christ. That is the first person recorded in the Bible that He ever told He was the Christ, a half-breed. Now, that'll say something about His Gospel, won't it? It was not just a Jewish message. So He met with the woman there, and the first little village where a revival ever broke out was the little village of Sychar where that woman lived.

And, from there, He continued on His journey, verse 46. "He came again into Cana of Galilee." He's moving north. He's gone through Samaria. He's won that woman to Himself and some of the people of the city; and He came to Cana again. Again "There was a nobleman, whose son was sick at

Capernaum." That's even further north, and the nobleman was there; and...and he heard that Jesus was coming into Galilee; and...and he heard about His power; and he heard about what He had done, no doubt, in the miracle at Cana; and he went and he said, "Oh, if you could do something for my son. He's near to death." And you remember what Jesus said in verse 50, "'Go thy way; thy son lives.'" And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him and went his way, and when he got back home, the servants met him and told him, 'Thy son liveth!'" Verse 54 says, "This is the second miracle that Jesus did when He was come out of Judea into Galilee." Now you know the setting, people. Jesus is moving to Galilee to begin His ministry.

Now let's go back to Matthew 4, and you'll see what verse 12 says. "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee." Now you see where Matthew is? And when He departed, He went through Samaria. John records the leading of the Samaritan woman to...to Himself; and He healed the nobleman's son on His way into Galilee. Now you're right up to date; and all of that interval there took approximately one year of the life of Jesus.

On the way to Galilee, He had such a wonderful occasion to win some people to Christ who were the most despised people of all. Isn't it amazing that the first people that He really evangelized with the message of His Messiahship were not even Jews?...That'll say something about what He had in mind. People say, 'Well, if it hadn't have been for the unbelief of Israel, He never woulda gone to the Gentiles at all.' Don't you believe that. If Israel had have believed, He simply would've used them to reach the Gentiles. That was always the plan in the Old Testament anyway.

Now, Matthew leaves all that other stuff out, because he wants to focus on the King starting His official ministry; and, for Matthew, the official ministry begins when the herald goes to jail, when the heralding is done, and the king arrives, that's Matthew's official beginning. John is cast into prison, and Jesus begins His ministry...and the ministry officially began in Galilee where the Light dawned, where the day Star arose, where the bright and morning Star was first to shine. Why? Because Galilee was the place of the greatest darkness, and the place of the greatest darkness always has the greatest need for light.

Now, I want us to see six features in the next couple of weeks, not tonight. We'll get a few of 'em tonight. Six features. We see Jesus begin His ministry. Now watch this. You have an outline you can follow along. We see Him begin His ministry at the right point in the right place by the right proclamation with the right partners on the right plan for the right purpose. I just want you to get the picture that God does things right...When Jesus began His ministry, it was right, at the right point in the right place with...by the right proclamation with the right partners on the right plan for the right purpose.

His ministry began, first of all, at the right point. Let's look just at that. At the right point, verse 12. "Now when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee." The sense of

timing in the life of Jesus Christ is absolutely amazing. He was always on a divine timetable. He had in His heart an eternal clock clicking away with sovereign hands ticking off His destiny with unfailing accuracy. He moved gracefully in accord with a divine timetable. Everything at its exact moment.

Paul, in the Galatian letter says, "He was born in the fullness of time." Throughout the Gospel of John, particularly, he talks about His hour has not yet come. His hour is not yet come. His hour is not yet come. And then, later on in the Gospel, all of a sudden you find him beginning to say in the 13th chapter, "Mine hour is come. Mine hour is come." You find it again in the 17th chapter. He had a sense of timing that was divine. There was a time and a point for everything, and Jesus knew that He would begin His official ministry when John was in prison. It was time to start.

Matthew has this...this aspect of the Holy Spirit's inspiration to set up as a real feature here for us that we might see the incredible and amazing accuracy of God's historic plan. It was the hour for Jesus to begin.

Now let's look at verse 12 in particular. "When Jesus had heard." I think that's interesting, just that much. I got bogged down in these verses, 'cause every little phrase started to say something to me. I'm not gonna talk to you about Jesus' ears and how wonderful it is that He can hear. We won't beg the point, but it was interesting to me that it says, "When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison," I thought to myself, "By simple, common report, He got the news." You know, He never let His omniscience get in the way of the practical things.

"You mean Jesus had to wait for the report that John was in prison? He who know what was in the heart of every man?" Well, he never used His supernatural knowledge...to bypass ordinary means that could accomplish the same thing. That was part of His becoming human -- submitting Himself where all poss...at all possible, to all human characteristics. So He heard, and what He heard is this: John was cast into prison. That might shock you. You say, "Wait a minute. Why, you told us earlier in Matthew that all of Jerusalem and all of Judea was going out there, and the Pharisees were there. The Sadducees were there. Everybody was there saying, "Wow, this guy's great. He's a prophet." And everybody was coming to him to be baptized and repenting of their sin and hearing the message, "Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand," and...and it was just great; and he was popular, and he was riding a crest, and he was riding a wave of popularity. What in the world happened? Weren't the Jews supportive? How did he ever get in prison? Weren't they somewhat fearful of him? After all, wouldn't the leaders be a little bit tense if this man was so popular with myriads of people to dare to throw him in prison?...

I'll show you how it happened, because the whole story is in Luke 3:19. Two verses tell it...Luke 3:19. Now this is gonna get a little bit interesting here, so hang on. "But Herod,"... and when the Bible talks about Herod, it isn't always the same one. Herod is just a...just a big name. It's just a name that encompasses all kinds of people. There were a whole buncha Herods. They all...they...that's like

Caesar. There was Caesar this and Caesar that and Caesar this and Caesar that. The same with Pharaohs. Herod could mean a lotta people.

"But Herod the tetrarch," now that's just a mathematical word that means a ruler over a fourth of something. Herod who was the ruler over a fourth of something. This man's real name was Herod Antipas like you get in an Italian restaurant. So you remember it. Herod the Italian, right? But Herod the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, is the man in view.

Now, let's see what happened. "Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by John the Baptist for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison." Do you wanna know something? It wasn't even the Pharisees, and it wasn't even the Sadducees, and it wasn't even the people. It was this foreign Idumaeen, non-Jewish king who had been appointed, really, by his father, Herod the Great, who had been appointed by the Romans as sort of a quasi-king in Israel.

Now, backing up. The Romans had allowed this Idumaeen, non-Jewish man named Herod the Great to be the king over this part of the world. But when Herod the Great, who was the king of the whole deal, died, he had several sons; and he split up the whole area among his sons. Son, the first one is Archelaus, and Archelaus became the ruler of the area in the south called Judea and Samaria; and the second one is Philip; and Philip, who is called also Philip the tetrarch, took over the area of Trachonitis and Iturea. Now lemme show ya. Judea and Samaria's in the south. Trachonitis and Iturea is way up here in the north, and the middle area, Galilee and Peraea, went to Herod Antipas. So Herod Antipas was the guy in charge of the area of Galilee and Peraea. Now the plot thickens. Okay?

Herod the Great had a pile of wives, and his children all had different mothers...and they all intermarried with each other in sort of a half-baked incest; and so they were a really fouled up pile of people, believe me. One of the greatest anxieties of my life was studying New Testament introduction; and any seminary student in existence knows the pain of that horrible experience of trying to unscramble the Herodian egg...the Herodian omelet, better...and figure out who's what and who married whom; because they kept intermarrying until there was such a debacle it was incredible.

Anyway, where am I?...Herod the Great had these children by different wives. Herod Antipas, who was the ruler of the Galilee area, was the son of Herod of Great by a woman named Malthace. Now, one of Herod's other wives named Mariamne -- Mariamne I, 'cause he had a later Mariamne II -- anyway, stay with me. You're gonna get it. You're gonna get it. Takes me all night, you're gonna get it. Okay?

All right, Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace. He had a half-brother named Herod Philip. Please, that is not the same as Philip the tetrarch. He named two sons Philip, just to

go with the two wives named Mariamne, so nobody could ever figure out anything...Anyway, Herod Antipas had a half-brother by a different mother, but the same father, by the name of Philip. Now, Philip was such a rotten kid that he was rejected by his father; and he didn't get a piece of anything. He wound up in Rome living as a private citizen. He was extremely wealthy, but he had no royalty. He was not given any kind of kingdom. He was simply a private citizen.

Now, he had a wife who was just a horrible, ghastly, immoral, awful woman by the name of Herodias...So you have this man named Philip, who is a non-ruling member of Herod the Great's family living in Rome. He's got this wife, Herodias, who eventually gets her daughter Salome to dance and get John the Baptist's head on a plate. She's a rotten, vile, incredible woman who literally destroyed everything she touched, and we'll see more about her as we get later into the 11th chapter of Matthew. Or I guess it's the 14th chapter. Somewhere, anyway.

But any...at this point, I just want you to understand that Philip, this sort of outcast brother, had this wife named Herodias. Well, Herod Antipas...by the way, I gotta add this. Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great by another mother. Now figure that out...Let's see. Philip married his niece. What happened was Herod the Great had a son who had this daughter Herodias. One of his other sons married his own half-brother's daughter or his own niece. It was just incredible what was going on in that family.

Well, Herod Antipas visited Rome to see his half-brother, who was married to his father's son's daughter, Herodias; and to make it worse, he seduced his half-brother's niece, Herodias, committing some kind of horrible incest to add to what was already a horrible debacle. He literally seduced Herodias, committed adultery, incest, and led her to divorce Philip and marry him. Well, you know what happened? John the Baptist didn't think that was right...and it says in verse 19, that John the Baptist "reproved him for all the evils which Herod had done."

You know, he was a bold, blunt, powerful, godly man; and he just said it because it needed to be said. You know what happened? Herod Antipas grabbed him and threw him in prison; and it wasn't very long, and it is Matthew 14 that Salome did her dance, and they went in there, and they whacked his head off and brought it in on a plate...He was imprisoned in a dungeon, in a castle of Machaerus. Machaerus is located on the shore of the Dead Sea, and archeologists have found it. They found the tunnels. They found the caves that were a part of that ancient prison; and it was there that John was kept until he was finally beheaded, all because he was bold and strong and fearless. Kinda great, isn't it? To face society that way. God knows we need more people like that. We need more people who will stand up and say what's right and what's wrong in society. It doesn't matter who the people are. Anybody from the president right on down to your neighbor.

John Knox once was standing for his principles against Queen Mary, who is not a boat, but really was a lady one time; and he was confronting -- I think we think only that it's a ship, you know, and forget

that there was a real Queen Mary. He was standing confronting Queen Mary, and she said to him after taking all of the things that he had rebuked her for, she said to him, "Do you think it is right that the authority of your monarch be resisted?" His answer was, "If princes exceed their bounds, Madame, they may be resisted and even deposed."...

John the Baptist had that kinda courage. It's always a dangerous thing to say the truth. It's always a dangerous thing to confront the system. John did it, and he lost his freedom, and he lost his life. But you know something? That was all a part of God's clock. That was all a part of God's timing; because, when you go back to Matthew 4, when John was cast into prison, Jesus departed to Galilee. The imprisonment of John meant the beginning of His work, meant that the Samaritan woman would be waiting at the well, that the nobleman's son would be waiting to...to be raised from his deathbed, that Galilee would be waiting to be healed and preached to, and souls would be won, and the Messiah would begin His ministry. It all was triggered by the imprisonment of John. Isn't it amazing how the fools of this world who think they act in the preservation of themselves only trigger the great, historic events that God planned before the world began?...

Now, you say..."When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee, was He afraid? Was Jesus afraid? Did He run to Galilee because he feared what Herod Antipas might do to him?" I've got news for you. I told you about ten minutes ago that Herod Antipas was the ruler of what? Galilee...If...if that was the problem, then He went the wrong way. He shoulda run into the territory of Archelaus or the territory of Philip the tetrarch...

No, Jesus didn't run because he was afraid of Herod. No Herod ever put fear in Jesus' heart. No man ever did that. Say, "Well, why did He go?" John chapter 4 verse 1. Now listen. This is most interesting. Do you know what the Jewish leaders felt when John was imprisoned by Herod? You know how they felt? Take a guess. They were thrilled. They didn't try to stop it. They didn't try to forbid it. They were 100 percent thrilled that John the Baptist got put in prison. Jesus knew it. They wouldn't have done it, because it would've feared the people; but when it was done, they were thrilled. Now look at verse 1 of John 4. "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, He left Judea and departed into Galilee."

Listen, they hated John for making so many disciples; and they were glad when Herod did what he did; and, listen, when Jesus heard that they knew He did more than John did, then He knew well what would be coming for Him. You say, "Was He afraid of them? Was He afraid of the Pharisees?" No, He was avoiding a premature crisis; and He did it all through His life. It wasn't His hour, right? It wasn't His hour. It wasn't time for Him to be captured in Jerusalem. It wasn't time for Him to have a conflict with the Pharisees. It wasn't on God's clock or God's calendar yet. Listen, when the time came, Jesus would face those Pharisees nose to nose. He would face those religious leaders head on. He would face the Sadducees, the chief rulers of the Jews, and He wouldn't wince, and He wouldn't back down when the time came. He even said to them, "You don't take My life from Me. I

lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it up." And when they came to get Him in the Garden in John 18, He said, "You just listen to this. If I wanted, I could call on legions of angels." He didn't run because He was afraid of Herod, and He didn't run because He was afraid of the Pharisees. He went to Galilee because He was avoiding a premature crisis.

The same thing happened in Nazareth when they tried to kill Him in His own city, and He passed away from them, and they didn't even see Him. He disappeared in their midst. It was too soon for Him to be taken to trial and to death. So when Jesus knew how they felt about John, and He knew that they were so glad John was incarcerated, and they knew that they hated John; and He said when He knew they knew that He did more than John, it was time for Him to move. So He moved...to Galilee.

And you know what happened? When He got to Galilee, first place He went, where do you think? Where had He spent the first 30 years of His life? Where? Nazareth. That little town, that little town on the brow of that hill. I've seen it a few times. That little town that just sits up there and kinda sparkles. Nazareth. He went to Nazareth, and Luke tells us exactly what happened. Luke 4:16..."And He came to Nazareth...where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." I imagine from the time He was a little boy that was true, don't you? I mean I imagine from the time He was a child, Joseph and Mary had taken Him there...

"And He stood up to read this time. And there was delivered to Him a book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, he found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He's anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and He sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" Wow! What a statement! He was saying, "I'm the Messiah."...

"And they all bore witness and wondered at His gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' And He said unto them, 'Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb: 'Physician, heal thyself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.' And He said, 'Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.'" And that was really the beginning of the end. He knew it, and you remember what happened? When He got all done with His speech, verse 28, "Everybody in the synagogue, they heard these things, were filled with wrath. They rose up, thrust Him out of the city, led Him to the brow of a hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down headlong."

And here's what I said to you a moment ago. "He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." It was too soon for Him to die. He passed from their midst. But do you know something? That was

the end of Nazareth. He couldn't stay there anymore. Hadda go somewhere else. Hadda make a new home. You know where it was? Luke 4:31, "And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee." And you would come down. Nazareth's on a hill. Capernaum, right down on the water on the north...top... north point of the Sea of Galilee. He avoided the crisis, because he was on a divine schedule, on a divine timetable; and He said goodbye to the little town where He'd given so much of His life, because they didn't want Him. He was without honor in His own country, and He came and made His home...in the village of Capernaum.

And so says Matthew 4:13, "And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum." You know something? That put a tremendous weight of responsibility on Capernaum, didn't it? You know, Capernaum wasn't any more gracious to Jesus than was Nazareth, and one day Jesus cursed that city and said of that city, "Capernaum, it's gonna be better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than it's gonna be for you...This was My home. You saw what I did. You heard what I said. You turned your back on Me. Better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you."

And so we see Jesus beginning His ministry. He begins it when John's ends. He begins it in Galilee, called Galilee of the Gentiles, because His Gospel is for everybody. His first convert is a Samaritan woman. His first village, Sychar in Samaria. The first miracle, a wedding in Cana, not Jerusalem...the first healing, a Galilean nobleman's son. Do you notice something? Do you notice how specifically He avoids Jerusalem and Judea?...Lest people think His message is an accommodation of current Judaism...But His message is for the world.

So He began at the right time, and second point for next time, in the right place. Why Capernaum? Why Galilee and not Jerusalem, Judea? Well, let's pray.

Father, we see the...majesty of our dear Lord Jesus Christ...We've just walked with Him tonight...just spent an hour...in His presence. We've seen Him coming down out the place of the devastation, the place of temptation after defeating Satan; and the angels fed Him, ministered. We've seen Him as he comes down and lingers in John's area, as John has three days to affirm that this is the Messiah. This is the Savior. This is the King...We see Him as He walks away, and a few follow Him, and He calls His first disciples...We feel like a part of that group, even, Father...We see Him as He goes to Cana with that little group, does a wonderful miracle to confirm in their minds that He is who they want Him to be so much. Then it's to Jerusalem to officially present Himself; and in the official presentation, He has to clean the place up, because it's so full of sin. Gotta get it ready...And then it's to preach and to baptize, along with John, till John's work comes to an end; and then it's to Galilee. Salvation to a...to a sinful woman...a harlot. Salvation to a group of half-breeds. Healing to a Galilean nobleman's son. Goodbye to a little village...that wanted to kill the very One who'd spent 30 years living a perfect life in its midst. Finally, to Capernaum, home base for the incredible, astounding, amazing, miraculous ministry that He would begin in Galilee. Thank You, Father, for letting us trace His footsteps...We love the Lord Jesus so much...to just be able to feel like we're a

part of His life and ministry, not only in the past, but in the present is so exciting. Father, as we walked with Him tonight, so He walks with us...in us, empowering us, leading us, guiding us, loving us. What a joy that is. Thank You. Thank You for Matthew, for the Holy Spirit who inspired him to give us this glimpse. Thank You for John the Baptist, for his boldness, for his willingness to confront the system. Teach us, Father, the lesson of functioning on a divine timetable. Help us not to run ahead of You. Jesus waited 30 years. Help us not to be in a hurry. Jesus waited till John was finished before He began. Help us not to push, and to be patient and waiting for You to open up the plan to us.

And, Lord, we pray tonight that if there are some who don't know You, who've never met Jesus Christ, that He might walk into their life tonight. He who is still alive, ever as much alive as He was the day He came into Galilee. May this be the day that He enters their heart; and for those of us with whom He's walked, since we believed, may we walk close to Him, feel His presence, sense His life...follow His plan. Pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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