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

The Light Dawns, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 4:13-17
Code: 2194

We're going to continue in our study of Matthew tonight in the fourth chapter, and I encourage you to look along with us in your Bible. If you don't have one with you, why, there should be one in the back of the pew there that you can follow along and stay with us, because the Lord has some wonderful things for us, I'm sure, in this fourth chapter.

Matthew chapter 4, and we're looking at the section beginning in verse 12. This is part 2 in this particular section from 12 through 25, the last part of the fourth chapter, and we've entitled it “The Light Dawns.” It is the introduction of the ministry of Jesus Christ as he begins His ministry officially in the world. After 30 years of waiting and anticipating, it's time for Him to begin and He begins in Galilee, as we saw in our last study together.

Now it had been night in Israel and the world for centuries, but it was the darkness before the dawn. The people of Israel primarily had prayed and hoped for and wished for and anticipated the coming of the Messiah, the righteous King, the One who would rule, the One who would bring light into darkness. This was the great cry of the hearts of the people of Israel. It is expressed repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. There are just a couple I would share with you, a couple of references; in Isaiah chapter 50, verse 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant that walketh in darkness and hath no light. Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God." In other words, when you get to the place where you see only darkness, don't give up. Stay trusting the Lord your God, and He's the one who will bring the light.

In Isaiah chapter 60, we find a further anticipation of light. This speaking of the millennial age, says, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be see upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Now in just those two scriptures, and there are many others, we find that there is this idea of the heart of the prophet that there is darkness in the world, but that God can be trusted for the anticipated revelation of light. There is coming an age of light. There is coming a personality of light that is going to dawn upon the world. Needless to say to you, because I know you are already aware of it, the Lord Jesus Christ was the dawning of that light.

And in Luke chapter 2, after Jesus was born and He was presented at the temple in Jerusalem, we find in verse 25 this word: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Now here was a man waiting for the Messiah, waiting for the consolation of Israel, the One who would come to comfort His people. "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's [Messiah or] Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms," that is Simeon lifted the child, "blessed God, and said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace'" - I can die now – "'for mine eyes have seen they salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.'" Listen now, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Now Simeon, a Jew, was anticipating the light that was going to break upon the darkness that had existed in Israel and the world for centuries. The dawn was coming and he knew because God had confirmed to him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the breaking of that light, the dawning of the reality of the Messiah. And so the Old Testament in its darkness anticipated the light of the Messiah and the great kingdom of light, His eternal kingdom. That, then, becomes the theme of Matthew chapter 4, the first few verses.

Now as I told you last time in Matthew, Matthew presents the King. We've already seen the King's ancestry, the King's arrival, the King's adoration, the King's anticipation, the King's announcer, the King's affirmation, the King's advantage, and now the King's activity. The King begins His ministry and Matthew picks it up, notice in verse 12. "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 sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah, the prophet, saying, 'The land of Zabulon, 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 of 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 here is the introduction by Matthew of the beginning of the official ministry of Jesus Christ: the light dawns. And last time we talked about the gap between verses 11 and 12. We talked about that interlude, those events that occurred recorded in John chapter 1 through chapter 4 that fill in the gap between verses 11 and 12. And as we come to verse 12, Jesus begins His official ministry, the ministry of the King.

Now let me suggest to you six features of the King's ministry that we're gonna be looking at. Everything was perfectly done. Everything was right on schedule, so that the King began His ministry - now notice - at the right point, in the right place, by the right proclamation, with the right partners, on the right plan, for the right purpose. Now last time we saw point number one. The Lord Jesus, when He began His ministry, began at the right point. And we noted that in verse 12 it tells us that Jesus didn't begin His ministry until John had been cast into prison. And I told you that the Lord was on a perfect timetable.

In fact, in Mark 1:14, listen to this: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" - now listen - "and saying, 'The time is fulfilled.'" It's time to begin. John is in prison, now is the time. And I suggested to you that the great principle we learn from, that is that God has all things marked out in His own time. It behooves us as Christians to function on God's timetable, to be patient, to wait upon the Lord, to function in a manner consistent with His will and His plan, and not with even pure motives be running ahead of God's plan and God's timing. Jesus began at exactly the right point because that was when God had set it up.

Secondly, He not only began His ministry at the right point, but in the right place. Let's look at that tonight. Nothing is random in the Lord's work. The very city, the very area, the very location was all a matter of divine decree. It was not a circumstance brought about by Herod's incarceration of John. It was not a circumstance brought about by Jesus being afraid of the Pharisees. It was not by any mob at Nazareth that this was dictated, but rather by God. Oh, all of those circumstances fit in somewhere, but it was God's decree. Jesus didn't run out of fear to Egypt. God had predicted in the Old Testament that He would call His Son out of Egypt. Jesus didn't run out of fear from Herod because Herod was in fact the ruler of Galilee. Jesus didn't run in fear from the Pharisees to Galilee. No, it was predicted by the prophet that He would begin His ministry there. It was not the mob at Nazareth that forced Jesus to reestablish His home in Capernaum. It was the prophet Isaiah who said centuries before that that was the plan of God that determined that.

So Jesus was moving at the right point to the right place. Now look at verse 12 for a minute. “He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali." Now, let's talk about Galilee. “Galilee” comes from a Hebrew word, *galil*, which means “a circle,” and Galilee is, believe it or not, a circle. It is an area that circles the sea known as the Sea of Galilee. It is also called the Lake of Chinnereth, but basically we know it as the Sea of Galilee. It is a country that circles that sea, bordered on the east plateau that now is known as the East Bank, bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the north by the

mountains of southern Lebanon, on the south by Judea, the southern part. And there that circle surrounds the Sea of Galilee, and it's known as *Galilu*, “Galilee.” It's stretched from the Lithiney River in the north to the Plain of Esdraelon, and even below. On the west, all the way through the coastal plain to the sea, the Mediterranean Sea and on the east, it was bounded by the cliffs, that in that day were possessed by the nation Syria - today Arab territory. Basically Galilee is about 50 miles from north to south and about 25 miles from east to west - 25 miles wide, 50 miles long; an area surrounding the Sea of Galilee.

Now it was a very densely populated area. And you've got to have a little geography, folks, so this whole thing is going to mean something to you when you get into the Galilean ministry. It is the most fertile region of Palestine, from the southern part of Palestine down around the city today known as Tel Aviv; down in the south, anciently known as Joppa. Remember Joppa? Peter was there on the roof when he got the vision. Well, from the southern part all the way north into Galilee - now the city of Haifa being the major city of the north - that whole coastal plain is called anciently the Valley of Sharon. And when you hear about the rose of Sharon, and that speaks volumes to anybody who understands geography because that valley is intensely fertile. It is bordered all the way along by the Carmel Mountain range - you remember Elijah on Mt. Carmel.

So Carmel is a group of mountains, not one mountain, but a group that runs up the coast; and between the Carmel range and the sea is the valley of Sharon, incredibly fertile. Then over the Carmel range there's another area between the Carmel range and the Sea of Galilee - another fertile area, tremendously fertile. This was the most productive land in all of the nation of Israel. In fact, there was a saying that it was easier to raise a legion of olives in Galilee than to bring up one child in Judea. Josephus, who at one time was the governor of Galilee - maybe you didn't know that; Josephus the historian - said, quote, "It is throughout rich in soil and pasture, producing every variety of tree, and inviting by its productivity even those who have the least inclination for agriculture, it is everywhere killed and everywhere it is productive." Even people without a green thumb can make anything grow in Galilee. And, of course, nowadays the nation Israel can produce all that it needs to supply its own nation with food right in those areas.

Now it also, because of its fertility, had an enormous population. In fact, Josephus tells us, and he's writing about the time of the New Testament era - maybe not pinpointing it exactly but close - and Josephus tells us that there were 204 villages in Galilee at that time. Now if you know anything about an area 25 miles wide and 50 miles long, you know to get 204 villages in there is pretty packed. In fact, none of the villages, according to Josephus, had fewer than 15,000 people, which would make the total population of Galilee about three million sixty thousand. It's amazing that they had that many people there and still had enough room left to grow the things, the things they grew.

Now Jesus, then, when He began His ministry in Galilee - now mark this - did not begin His ministry out in the wilderness where nobody was. The place literally teemed with people. It was populace, and further, it was a great place to begin your ministry, not only because of the people, but because of the mentality. It was much less traditional than Judea. It would be sort of like the difference between trying to preach the gospel in a rural area of Italy as opposed to trying to preach the gospel in the Vatican City. You just might run into a little tougher opposition in the Vatican City, because there was where the center of religious tradition existed. The same is true in terms of the land of Israel. Jerusalem was the place of tradition. Galilee was a little freer. In fact, Josephus says of the Galileans, and I quote him again, "They were fond of innovations and by nature disposed to change and they delighted in seditions," or they liked revolution. They liked to disagree. That's a good place to begin. In fact, the historians tell us that it was a great place to get a bunch of people for a revolution. Or, if you wanted to start an insurrection, you just went to Galilee and gathered your army. They were non-traditionalists. They were ready, at the drop of a hat, to go against the grain. And Jesus knew that that would be a good place to gather followers who wouldn't be afraid to fight the old tradition.

Now the name Galilee got a little bit added to it, and if you'll notice at the end of verse 15, it is called “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Now that was the name of mockery because Galilee, though it was territorially Israel, had long ago begun to kind of mix together with the Gentiles. And, of course, to a Jew that's a very despicable thing to do, so there was much frowning upon Galilee because of the mixture of people that lived there. But, you see, Galilee was surrounded by foreign people. Along the coast, the very coastline itself, was that great people who sailed the Mediterranean Sea known as the Phoenicians. On the northern part were Syrians. On the southern part were Samaritans. You remember the southern part of Israel, and the northern part were separated by Samaria where the half-breeds lived. So they had the half-breed Samaritans on the bottom of them, and they had on the north and east the Syrians, and on the west they had the Phoenicians.

And so there was a tremendous non-Jewish influence. And it tended to sort of water down the traditionalism, and they were open to something fresh, and they were open to something new, and Jesus knew that. He selected that area. Additionally, the roads of the world, the great roads of the world running from the east to the west and the north to the south, passed immediately through Galilee. Now we know about this; in fact, there was a very famous road in those days known as the Way of the Sea. And the Way of the Sea led from Damascus through Galilee and then made a left turn and went right down to Africa. Things coming from the eastern part of the world would come to Damascus; they'd be taken west to Galilee and then straight down into Africa. The road to the east went through Galilee and right on out to the furthest frontiers of the east, so it was a trade route. Because of that there was a tremendous mingling. Jerusalem never had that. Because of Jerusalem's

location it was isolated. It was on a high, high plateau. People didn't bother to go up there. It was in a desolate desert area to the east and a coastline to the west - desert to the south, and so Jerusalem never had that trade element as did Galilee. The traffic of the world passed through there.

In fact, one writer said Judea - that is the south - is on the way to nowhere and Galilee is on the way to everywhere. And so, because of the mentality of the people - they were open to change - because of the constant influx of non-Jewish influence, and because of the tremendous population of people in a highly productive agricultural area, Jesus was planned by God to begin His ministry there.

Now let me talk a little more about Galilee. I get fascinated about stuff like this, and I think you will too. Listen, Galilee's geographical position had affected its history dramatically. Originally Galilee was assigned when God gave Israel the land. You remember God gave Israel the land. They broke it up into twelve tribes, remember that? Well, the Galilean section was given to Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun. You can find that in Joshua chapter 9. It was Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun. Notice in verse 13 it tells us that it's “the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali,” and that is also in verse 15. So it was the original territory of these tribes. But these tribes made a terrible mistake. When God sent all the tribes into Israel, after the wanderings, and God got them all organized. He told them to do one thing, one very important thing. He said, "Run out all the Canaanites." Get rid of all the Canaanites. Zebulun and Naphtali didn't do that. And so from the very start, because they didn't expel the Canaanites, they began with a mixed population.

So here they had this mixture from the very beginning. In fact, in the 8th century B.C., 800 years before Christ, the Assyrians literally engulfed the whole land and took the people exile; and strangers settled in Galilee. Another important date in the history of Galilee is 164 B.C. A hundred and sixty-four years before the time of Christ, Simon Maccabees chased the Syrians back to their own territory and took back a remnant of Galilee. In 104 B.C. a man named Aristobulus reconquered Galilee totally for the Jewish nation, and you know what he did? He forcibly circumcised its inhabitants. He was going to make it Jewish no matter what. So, from the actual time of the captivity of the northern kingdom, in the 8th century, clear to 164, that was a place inhabited by strangers. In 164 there was a remnant. In 104 it was conquered again for the Jewish nation and repopulated by Jews. But the influence through those centuries and centuries and centuries of Gentiles had tended to diminish the strong Jewish traditionalism of that part of the land of Israel.

So it was a place of variety, open to new ideas and new influences. And Jesus was to begin in fertile soil where He knew He could gain a hearing before He went to Jerusalem where they slammed the door in His face and nailed Him to a cross.

Now further, look at verse 13, "and leaving Nazareth," and you remember the reason He left Nazareth was because they chased Him outta there. The mob tried to kill Him, and He had to flee for His life. "He came and dwelt in Capernaum." Let's talk about Capernaum.

Jesus lived up until He was 30 in Nazareth. And then when He finally announced to them in the synagogue who He was, and He said, "This day is this prophecy fulfilled in your ears, I am your Messiah," they were furious. They took Him out to the brow of the hill. They were gonna throw Him off the hill. They didn't want Him. The prophet was without honor in His own city, and so he settled in Capernaum. The word means “the village of Nahum,” “the village of Nahum.” Some say it was named after the prophet Nahum. I don't know. If you translate the word *Nahum* it means “compassion.” It could just be a title – “the village of compassion.”

It's a famous little town. In the time of Jesus it was a flourishing city. Matthew himself had his tax office there. Matthew 9:9 tells us that. It was there that Jesus called his disciples. John 1 - we studied last time - the first time Jesus called His disciples, the first group that He ever called, He called in Capernaum. We'll see again there in Capernaum, here in the fourth chapter, as we note His meeting with His disciples again. It was in Capernaum that Jesus did miracle after miracle after miracle, and I don't even want to take the time but there are at least eight different miracles in the book of Matthew that occurred in Capernaum.

In fact - this is a beautiful thought in many ways - the 9th chapter, the first verse, of Matthew, this is what Matthew records: "And Jesus entered into a boat and passed over and came into his own city," and it was Capernaum. That was Jesus' own city. You know, I've been to Capernaum twice. They have uncovered the remains of the city. The ruins of the ancient synagogue at Capernaum have been lifted up. The pillars are up. The great beams of concrete or stone - really is what they are - stone have been laid on bits and pieces of the façade and the roof. They have reconstructed the synagogue, and it's a fantastic thing. It's right on the water. You can stand in the middle of the synagogue and flip a rock into the Sea of Galilee. To the left of that little synagogue, just a matter of a few steps away, is a house that they've uncovered. They say it is the earliest house occupied by Christians, because everywhere they found the sign of the fish. Some archeologists believe it was Peter's house and that's why the first church was established there. But they know that Christians met there because they found all over the place the sign of the fish. Capernaum was Jesus' own city, “the village of compassion.”

Now the location was strategic. It was right at the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee, a vital place. You could get there by boat; you could get there by land - access from anywhere. Now notice that it tells us that Capernaum, in verse 13, was in the seacoast, right on the water, “in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali,” that is, in the tribal territory which once was assigned to Zebulun and Naphtali. And it's called Galilee at the end of verse 13, or end of verse 15, “Galilee of the Gentiles.” It was really Galilee of the Jews until all those influences had come in. That was a title of mockery.

You know, one of the sad things about Capernaum is further on in Matthew. We'll get to this, but let me just give you a preview, Matthew 11:23, "And thou, Capernaum" - here's the final verdict on His own city - "and thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hades." Capernaum was exalted unto heaven because that was Jesus' city. Any city that could be the city of Jesus would be the recipient of the most exalted person that ever walked the earth. They were exalted to the heavens but would “be brought down to hades: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, ‘That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.’" That tremendous city situated, and I'll tell you, on one of the most beautiful locations of any city I've ever seen - absolutely magnificently nestled at the foot of those beautiful hills, right on the coast, an incredible place for a city - and right now, in 1978, you know how many people live in Capernaum? One old monk if he hasn't died. Desolate, as desolate as Sodom and Gomorrah, brought down to hades because it never recognized the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, so Jesus chose Galilee. The whole idea must have been just offensive to Jerusalem Jews. That the Messiah would settle in Capernaum of Galilee. You've gotta be kidding. There are no theologians there. That's a place where people are farmers and fishermen. The outstanding Jewish minds were in Jerusalem. The revelation of God was to be in Jerusalem. That was the sacred city and the only fitting place for the Messiah. It must have been as offensive to them as was the announcement of John, here in the fourth chapter, when he announces to the whole world when he wrote his gospel that the first person Jesus ever revealed His messiahship to was a Samaritan.

Galilee? A Galilean messiah was ludicrous. In John chapter 7, verse 40, "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, ‘Of a truth this is the Prophet.’" Many of them said that. "Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'Shall Christ come out of Galilee?'" Galilee?! “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” And later on that same crowd, in John 7:52, "Answered and said to him, 'Are you also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee arises no prophet.'" What are you talkin’ about?

But out of Galilee did arise the greatest prophet. They thought they were so smart. They knew so well their Scripture. Did they forget the 9th chapter of Isaiah? Did they forget this? Listen to verse 14: "That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The land of Zabulon, the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea.'" Remember I told you that is a proper name for a certain road that went right through Galilee. "'Beyond the Jordan. Galilee of the Gentiles; the people who sat in darkness'" - the darkened Galileans – "'saw a great light; to them who sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.'" Now beloved, that's a paraphrase of Isaiah chapter 9, verses 1 and 2, and I want you to look at that with me. Tremendous passage.

Look now at Isaiah 8, and I want to take you right into the 9th chapter and show you how thrilling a prophecy this is. It never ceases to amaze me how accurately Jesus fulfilled every single prophecy. If there were no other evidence, that would be sufficient evidence to convince me that the Bible was true. Now listen to Isaiah 8:19, and let's see. Here is a pathetic scene of sin that existed in Isaiah's day. Let me just tell you this: Ahaz was the king, and Ahaz was rotten. In fact, Ahaz had introduced idolatry into Israel. The worship of Molech - and you'll remember Molech was the savage god of the Ammonites, and the Molech worshipers used to put babies in fires.

Well the worship of Molech had been introduced and established, believe it or not, on the Mount of Olives, by Ahaz. A brazen statue of Molech was erected, and at the feet of Molech this brazen statue was a fire into which the babies were thrown on the Mount of Olives. Idols and superstitions were everywhere. In fact, Ahaz had even shut the temple doors and left the whole thing to rot and decay. Now this is Isaiah's time. And believe me, if there was ever a dark time in the history of Israel it was then.

And listen to what he says in 8:19, "And when they shall say unto you, 'Seek unto those who are mediums and unto wizards that peep and mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? Should they seek on behalf of the living to the dead?'" These people were involved in witchcraft and all kinds of things. And then he says, "To the law and to the testimony:" - and this is like a battle cry, "Back to the law, back to the testimony" – "if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no" – What? – "light in them. And they shall pass through it greatly distressed and hungry. And it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry they shall fret themselves and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness."

Isaiah says – listen - Israel is dark. The area is dark. The people of God have been darkened. The nation is dark. And he says in the midst of their evil they are driven in the darkness, a pathetic, tragic picture. But, it doesn't end there.

Chapter 9:1, "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 the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles." In other words, he's saying, “The dimness is not always gonna to be there. It's not always gonna to be like it was in the vexation. Zebulun and Naphtali was the most hard hit by the judgment." A little before Isaiah made this prophecy, by the way, just a little before he did it, the inhabitants of this area, Galilee, were carried away by a man known as Tiglath-Pileser, who was the king of Assyria. You can read about it in 2 Kings 15. He came in and took them all out, just hauled them away. The land was desolate and waste - tragedy. He says, "It's been awful for Zebulun and Naphtali.”

At first it was a light affliction, verse 1, and afterward a more grievous affliction. But it won't always be this way, he says, the light will come, and it'll come to the land most brutalized. Verse 2, “The people that walked in darkness, they have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." You want to know something? The southern kingdom, when it was taken into captivity, returned. The northern kingdom never did. Their vexation and their darkness and their judgment was greater than that of the south, and so the Lord in His wonderful mercy and grace says that the part of the nation that knew the greatest judgment is the part of the nation that will know the greatest salvation. The most punished will be the most blessed. The most hated will be the most beloved. The light will dawn in Galilee, not just Galilee, but Galilee of the Gentiles. Galilee: conquered by the Gentiles, led captive by the Gentiles, repopulated by the Gentiles, dominated by Gentile influence; they will be the ones who see the dawn of the Messiah.

And beloved, I say to you that this is a great Old Testament indication that God always intended to redeem the world, not just the Jew. God will show that His salvation is for everyone apart from ritual, apart from religion, apart from tradition and institutions and temples and religious sacrifices and systems - the light is going to come. And the golden age is described in verse 3, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy. They rejoiced before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." He looks in the future, does Isaiah. And he says there's coming a day when that nation that has been so dark, that northern part so dim, is gonna to be lit with the light of the dawn of Messiah, and they're going to enter into the golden age. I believe verse 3 is a millennial promise. They will have multiplied joy. They will rejoice according to the joy in the harvest and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. There will be a great day of rejoicing.

Verse 4 says a day of liberation, "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." In other words, just like Gideon conquered the Midianites, God's gonna come in and conquer the enemies of that area of Galilee, and God's gonna set ’em free, turn on the lights, and give ’em liberty.

Verse 5 describes the victory, "Every battle of the warrior in the tumult" - that's the Hebrew here, “in the tumult” - "and garments rolled in blood shall be with burning and fuel of fire." In other words, God's going to come in and burn up all the enemies, clean it out, and bring the golden age to Galilee. Messiah will come to Galilee. Now remember, the Old Testament doesn't see the gap in the church age. Here Isaiah looks and he sees the Messiah coming to Galilee and bringing the golden age. It was only when the Jews rejected Jesus Christ that the golden age was separated from the first coming of the Messiah. Who is this light? Isaiah just keeps talking about a light, but he doesn't say who the light is. He just keeps saying it's going to be a golden age and the broken yoke and freedom and liberty and victory and the light will dawn, but who's the light?

Ah, verse 6. Remember this one? "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Father of eternity, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be” – What? – “no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with...justice” and with righteousness “from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

In His sovereign grace God will do the unexpected. Not mainly to the Jewish aristocracy, but to the downcast, to the mocked, to the afflicted, to the despised, to the ignorant, to the non-ritualistic, to the mixed multitude of Galilee, to them did He send His Son. To those in the greatest darkness He sent the greatest light. That's the grace of our God, and it was in and around Galilee, beloved. Remember this: it was in and around Galilee that Jesus spent most all of His life. He grew up there, He traveled from village to village there, He called His disciples there, He saved people there, He healed people there - in Galilee of the Gentiles.

A new day was dawning in the world when the light broke in Galilee. For centuries the land sitting in darkness - look what Matthew calls it - the region, he says, the region that exists in the shadow of death, exposed to military/political aggression, corrosive moral, religious influence from a pagan environment, but it was there that Jesus came to dispel the darkness, to dispel the death with words and deeds of love and mercy.

So, what did we learn then to begin with? When Jesus begins His ministry it's at the right point; it's in the right place. Let me just draw a little simple application of this second point. You know where Jesus went? He went to the neediest people, He went to the neediest people, and to the most receptive people. I think as I examine the ministry of Christ around the world, that's where the cry is - to go to the neediest people and the most receptive people. That's the challenge that God has placed in my heart. First of all, we need to go to the people who are waiting. The first Gentile that God ever sent a messenger to with the gospel was a Gentile whose heart searched longingly to know God - Cornelius. I think, first of all, we need to go to the people who most wait to hear. I don't always know how we know that, but I think that's the first target, the neediest people who are the most receptive. So, the King began His ministry, at the right point, in the right place, thirdly, with the right proclamation.

Verse 17, "From that time" - the time He began His ministry – "Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Now, this is the right proclamation. Nobody ever needed to discuss what Jesus' message was. There never was any question about the King's message, the person of Jesus Christ. He moved into a situation, you knew immediately where He stood - the message of Jesus Christ. He opened His mouth, there never was any doubt, and when the light broke and the light dawned, the keynote of the message was clear as it could be. It was the same as that of John the Baptist. You go back to our study of chapter 3, you notice that John, in verse 2, is saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And here Jesus is saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

There's two things here, people, and we've seen them already, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it. But the first thing is to repent. The second thing is the reason to repent. When the light dawned and Jesus came and men awoke from the stupor of darkness and they began to ask, "What is the meaning of the light, what does it mean that He's here, what is the significance?" And Jesus essentially said, "The darkness is upon you because the darkness is within you, and the darkness within you can be expelled if you repent." What does it mean to repent? It means you're a sinner and turn from it. It means to change your life. It means to be converted, to turn around, to become a part of God's kingdom. *Metanoe*, it means "a total change." It's more than sorrow; it's to change your life - change your purpose, change your opinion, change your direction. It's an inner change of the heart leading to an outer change of life. In fact, there's a better word, "converted," "be converted," "be converted" - a radical change in the heart; a radical change in the mind and the will. That's the issue.

Now just this reminder. This is ever the message of the gospel, to repent. We talked about the fact when first looking at this that you cannot come to Jesus Christ apart from repentance. In 2 Timothy 2:25 it says that we are to instruct false teachers and do so if God, or so that God perhaps “will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth...that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." In other words, repentance is on the path to acknowledging the truth. It's basic. Peter preached it on the Day of Pentecost - the very first sermon ever preached in the era of the church – “repent and be baptized.”

And so the message of repentance signals a spiritual crisis. You've got to turn around. You're going the wrong direction. Change your whole life; come to Christ. And the reason, we saw this as well – “the kingdom is at hand.” Jesus was saying this: He was saying the long awaited messianic rule is here. The kingdom is here. We're ready to have the kingdom. We're ready to establish the kingdom in the earth. We're ready to reign. We're ready to give you the promise of the Old Testament to fulfill the great anticipation of the prophets of the day when the land would be blessed and the people of God would dwell in the land. They would reign over their enemies and there would be rest and there would be peace. And the lion would lie down with the lamb, and all those wonderful things, and God would take out the stony heart and put a heart of flesh in His people and give them His Spirit and wash them with the water of regeneration. The great kingdom is here. It's waiting. It's imminent. “At hand” means it's next, it's the next event.

Tragically, as you know, it had to be postponed. The actual, literal, physical element of the kingdom had to be postponed. We'll see that later as you move into Matthew further. But there is a kingdom still, there is a kingdom, there is a form of the kingdom existing right now since Jesus came, and it's in the hearts of men. Oh, He's not ruling on the earth, but He's ruling in our lives, isn't He? Oh, there's not peace on the earth, but there's peace in us. We're not ministering for Christ in the millennial earth, but we're ministering for Christ here and now. We might say that the external kingdom had to be postponed. In the meantime it went inside, so that it is in us, in the ever-present, indwelling Christ. We have the rule of Messiah in our lives. Repentance is necessary. From that time, from the beginning of His ministry; from that time on Jesus preached repentance.

Can I add one little note here? I like to mention that Jesus preached, because I believe in preaching, and I'm always running into people who aren't sure we oughtta preach. They're not sure there's a place for preaching. Maybe we oughtta just have small group studies and things like that. Jesus preached. The word is *kruss*. It means “to proclaim.” The fine Bible commentary writer named Lenski says this: "The point to be noted is that to preach is not to argue or reason or dispute or convince by intellectual proof against all of which a keen intellect may bring counter argument. We simply state in public, or testify to all men the truth, which God bids us state. No argument can assail the truth

presented in this announcement or testimony. Men either believe the truth, as all sane men should, or refuse to believe it, as only fools venture to do," end quote. It's a great thing to preach. You know, that's why I just love the tape ministry. People can't even argue. You're not even there.

There's something to be said, beloved, for proclamation. And when Jesus preached - I was thinking about it this way - when Jesus preached He preached with certainty. There was never any doubt about His message. There was never any “well it seems to Me,” or “probably,” or “we really don't know for sure about this point.” Goethe said, "Tell me about your certainties, friend. I have enough doubts of my own." He's right. Preaching must be a proclamation of certainty.

Second thing I noticed in the preaching of Jesus is not only that He preached with certainty, but that He preached with authority. And there's only one way to preach with authority, my friend, and that's to believe that the thing you're saying is in fact the Word of an authoritative God. You know, if you don't believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, you can't preach with authority. Jesus preached with absolute, unflinching authority. In Matthew chapter 7 and verse 28, "It came to pass when Jesus ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his teaching." Why? "For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." You know how the scribes taught? “Well, we really don't know this particular interpretation, you see. Rabbi so and so says and rabbi so and so says, and of course then rabbi so and so - and they're all fine fellas, and so we just leave the possibility that any of these could be correct.” That's the way the scribes did it. That's not the way Jesus did it, and they were astonished because He taught as one having authority. He preached with certainty. He preached with authority. And then a third thing, He preached with a commission, He preached with a commission.

You know, I'm not interested in a preacher who’s preaching his own opinion. I'm only interested in a preacher who is representing God, and that was Jesus. His source was God, and so He preached with certainty, with authority, and with a divine commission. And His message today is still the same, beloved, still the same. Be converted, turn around, turn around, and as in that day He went to the neediest people where He would get the widest acceptance to begin His ministry, before He tackled the hard part, in order that He might gather a group of believing people.

So today He comes to the neediest heart; the heart that has been prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit and is receptive, and there He begins His conversion work. It's the same work because it's the same message, same Christ. What a joy it is to be able to stand in the tradition of Jesus Christ, if you will, and preach with authority and certainty, with a divine commission. For all who responded in Galilee, for all who responded in Judea, for all who have responded through the ages of the church,

the kingdom of God has come in a real sense and a spiritual sense. The day I became a Christian, God became the king of my life, and it began at that point that God has poured out to me the blessings of being a son of the King. That's the message of the gospel. The light dawned in Galilee. Jesus began to preach and to save people.

Now let me tell you somethin' really exciting. Jesus has never wanted to do it alone, and so He began at the right point, in the right place, with the right proclamation, and the right partners. That's for next time. You can be one of those partners. A few weeks from now we're gonna to see how you can be a partner of Jesus Christ in fishing for men. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for your Word. And Lord, we know tonight we've dealt with some geographical things and historic things, but we know too that these are going to stand us in good stead as we continue to study and relate back to the scene in Galilee as You traverse those little hills again and again, very deep into our hearts and minds the truth that is of You. May we forget what is human. May we visualize the Lord Jesus Christ in the beauty of His ministry preaching that men be converted that they might know the kingdom in all of its phases - the present, internal; and the future, external; and then the final, eternal.

Father, may we have a greater love than before for the matchless Jesus Christ, the Light that dawned in the place where it was the darkest and the hearts were the neediest but the most open. May we be ever grateful that that same light came to us in our darkness, in our need, when we were open by the preparation of the Holy Spirit. Lord, make us grateful. In Christ's name. Amen.

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