

## Matthew 4D

- We've completed our study of the temptations of Christ, which qualified Jesus to be our New Adam
  - Jesus demonstrated He is truly the sinless Man Who will restore what Adam forfeited
    - And as fascinating as this section of the Gospel maybe, I resisted the temptation to spend more time in this area
    - Instead, we move on in chapter 4 to the next phase of Jesus' earthly ministry
    - Jesus is now ready to begin collecting disciples who will learn from Him and follow Him
  - But Matthew's accounts of how Jesus gained His disciples can be a bit confusing
    - Jesus' recruitment effort didn't happen in a single moment...it happened over a period of days and weeks
    - And the four Gospel writers each record different moments in that process
    - We're studying Matthew, of course, so that's where we will focus our attention
    - But to make sure you follow Matthew's narrative, I'll summarize details from the other Gospels to be sure we get the full picture
  - But before we get into that topic, Matthew first covers some of Jesus' early moments in the Galilee

**Matt. 4:12** Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee;

**Matt. 4:13** and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

**Matt. 4:14** This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

**Matt. 4:15** "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

**By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles —**

**Matt. 4:16** “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light,  
And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death,  
Upon them a light dawned.”

**Matt. 4:17** From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- At the end of the temptations, Matthew had Jesus standing atop a mountain near Jericho in the wilderness of Judea
  - But in reality, Satan’s final temptation of Jesus was the temptation to fall from the pinnacle of the temple
    - You’ll remember I said that Matthew re-ordered the temptations to place the kingdom temptation at the end
    - Matthew’s point was to emphasize that Jesus is the Promised King Who came to gain a kingdom
    - But Jesus would only gain it in the way the Father required, not in an illegitimate fashion
  - So, following that final temptation, Matthew says Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been imprisoned by Herod Antipas
    - Herod Antipas inherited rule over Galilee after his father, Herod the Great, died in 4 BC
    - Herod Antipas married the wife of his brother, Philip, committing adultery in the process
    - John the Baptist spoke out against Herod Antipas’ adultery and as a result, John was arrested and later beheaded
  - Upon learning John was arrested, Jesus withdrew to the Galilee
    - The Galilee is the name for the region in Israel immediately surrounding the Sea of Galilee in the north
    - The Sea of Galilee is a fresh water lake, not a salt sea, and it’s the main source of fresh water for all Israel
    - It’s shaped like a harp, so it’s also called Lake Gennesaret, from the Hebrew word for harp
  - More importantly, the Galilee was the place a person went to disappear

- Jerusalem was Israel's cultural, religious, and political center
- While the Galilee was the backwater, unsophisticated, blue collar farming region of Israel
- You'll remember there was a saying In Israel that nothing good came from Nazareth
- Unsurprisingly, Nazareth is located in the heart of the Galilee
- So Jesus has chosen to retreat into the Galilee to put some distance between Himself and those who might oppose Him
  - John's arrest was an indication to Jesus that Satan was turning up the heat
    - Remember, Jesus had just frustrated the enemy's attempts to tempt Jesus into sin
    - But don't think the enemy was done trying to stop God's plan at that point
  - On the contrary, Satan simply shifted his focus elsewhere, to stirring up opposition to Jesus and His message, beginning with attacking John
    - Satan brought evil men against the prophet to silence his message that the Messiah had arrived
    - At the same time, enemy worked equally hard to stir up those same evil men to oppose Jesus' ministry
    - John's Gospel tells us the Pharisees were concerned when they heard Jesus was attracting even more followers than John
  - So for the next three years, Jesus will spend most of His time ministering in the region of the Galilee out of the way of those who oppose Him
    - Eventually, Jesus must die, of course
    - So when the time is right the Lord will harness Satan's opposition to deliver His Son to the cross
    - But as we learned last week from Psalm 91, nothing bad could happen to the Messiah until that appointed time
    - So for now, Jesus will stay out of harm's way in the Galilee

- So in v.12 Matthew briefly mentions Jesus' departure for Galilee, but as he does, he skips a significant interval of time and a series of important events
  - Based on the other Gospels, we know that after the temptations ended, Jesus went back to Nazareth
    - Immediately, Jesus began to meet His first disciples, including Peter, Andrew and Nathaniel from that area of the Galilee
    - Soon after that Jesus, his mother and these first disciples attended a wedding together in the nearby town of Cana
    - At this wedding, Jesus He performed His first miracle of turning water into wine
  - After the wedding, Jesus traveled to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and disciples
    - After a few days, Jesus departs for Jerusalem to attend the first of four Passovers during His three year ministry (Jesus' final Passover puts Jesus on the cross)
    - During this visit to the temple, Jesus chases money changers out of the temple for the first time (He does it on His fourth visit also)
    - He also begins to perform public miracles and teach opening
    - As a result of Jesus' appearances in Jerusalem, Nicodemus comes to ask his questions of Jesus recorded in John 3
  - Around that time, John the Baptist is arrested, so following the Passover Jesus returns to the Galilee to escape His enemies
    - On the way to the Galilee, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4
    - Jesus eventually returns to His home in Nazareth, where He began to preach and travel around the Galilee
- That's where we pick up in Matthew 4:13 with Jesus leaving Nazareth for Capernaum once again
  - But this time, Jesus is moving permanently to settle in Capernaum
    - Capernaum is to become Jesus' headquarters for ministry in the Galilee
    - So why did Jesus make this move?

- In a word, because of unbelief
- We learn from Luke and John that after He returned to Nazareth following the Passover, Jesus' fame quickly spread
  - He was performing miracles and declaring the kingdom was at hand
  - On one occasion Jesus preached at a synagogue in Nazareth declaring opening that He was the promised Messiah
  - According to Luke, the town of Nazareth rejected Jesus' claims, largely because they thought of Him as just a local boy
- They were so angered by Jesus' claims, they tried to throw Jesus off a nearby cliff
  - Ironically, Satan had just tried to get Jesus to throw Himself off a high point to prove He was the Son of God
  - And now in Nazareth, people were trying to throw Jesus off a cliff because He was the Son of God
- Meanwhile, as Nazareth was rejecting the Messiah, Capernaum was embracing Jesus
  - Capernaum is a small fishing village located on the northern point of the Sea of Galilee
    - And the Gospels report that in contrast to Nazareth, Capernaum readily embraced Jesus' message and miracles
    - So Jesus moves with His family from Nazareth to Capernaum
    - But Jesus didn't make the move because Capernaum was more receptive
  - Matthew says Jesus' decision to settle in Capernaum was intended to fulfill Isaiah 9:1-2
    - Capernaum lies on the Via Maris, which means the Way of the Sea
    - The Via Maris was an important Roman trading route running from Egypt to Babylon
  - Thousands of traders passed through Caernaum on this route

- Which made Capernaum a strategic location from which to share the message of the Gospel
- From that one place, news of what Jesus was saying and doing could easily spread to many places in the world
- Isaiah said that would be God's plan

**Is. 9:1 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.**

**Is. 9:2 The people who walk in darkness  
Will see a great light;  
Those who live in a dark land,  
The light will shine on them.**

- Isaiah says that the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali would be especially blessed when the Lord brought light into darkness
  - Nazareth lies in the region of Zebulun while Capernaum lies in the region of Naphtali
  - The majority of Jesus' ministry took place in these regions along the northern end of the Galilee
  - Notice also that Isaiah says the Messiah's light would come "by the way of the sea," the name of that Roman road running through Capernaum
- So the prophet explicitly named the location that the Messiah would perform miracles and bring light to darkness
  - And more than Israel, Isaiah says the Messiah will also be sent to the Galilee of the Gentiles
  - As Gentile traders passed through the Galilee on the Via Maris, some encountered Jesus and His teachings, leading to early converts among the nations
  - Clearly, the Messiah isn't trying to hide in this place
  - Jesus is working in a very public fashion to announce His arrival
- In v.17, Matthew summarizes the message that Jesus was delivering to Israel in those early days of His ministry

- Much like John the Baptist, Jesus was saying repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand
  - Mark adds that Jesus said “the time is fulfilled” and “believe in the Gospel”
  - So the full message Jesus preached was “*Repent and believe in the Gospel, for the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.*”
- We know what Jesus meant by repent, because it’s the same message John the Baptist was preaching, which we studied back in chapter 3
  - And believing in the Gospel sounds easy enough to understand too
  - But what exactly was *the Gospel* at this point?
- Today we define the Gospel as Paul taught it
  - The Gospel is the testimony that Jesus died on a cross for our sins, was buried and raised again after three days (1Cor 15, Rom 10)
    - If you believe that testimony, if you trust in Jesus’ death to reconcile you to God and bring you into Heaven, then you shall be saved
    - If you don’t accept that message, you will pay the price for your sins, which is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire
  - But in Jesus’ day, Jesus hadn’t died yet, so what was the Gospel message Jesus preached while He was alive?
    - The Gospel Jesus preached is captured in the second half of Matthew’s statement in v.17
    - Jesus preached that the time is fulfilled, meaning that the promises of the Old Testament prophets were being fulfilled in their midst
    - And specifically, the time had come for the promised Kingdom of the Messiah, for the King Who would rule His people peace
  - The time for God to fulfill all those promises had now arrived, and so the Kingdom of God was ready to appear, Jesus said
    - Jesus supported His claims by teaching from OT Scripture how He was fulfilling prophecy

- And then Jesus performed supernatural miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit to validate His claims
- So that by His teaching and His miracles, Jesus quickly attracted large crowds, and according to John, many believed in Jesus as Messiah
- So if someone believed in Jesus' Gospel, they were accepting Jesus as their Promised Messiah, which resulted in personal salvation
  - Moreover, that person was also believing in Jesus' promise to set up the Messianic Kingdom in that day
    - The Old Testament prophets taught extensively that the Messiah when He came would rule over a physical kingdom on earth
    - The Messiah would sit on His throne in Jerusalem presiding over many nations ruling in peace and justice
    - That's what Jesus meant when He said the Kingdom of God was at hand
  - So during the days Jesus walked the world we could summarize the Gospel message this way
    - The message declared that salvation began with repenting from dead works of the law and of disobedience to God
    - In place of these things, a person placed their trust in Jesus' claims to be the promised Messiah in fulfillment of Scripture
    - And they submitted to His authority as their King ruling over the promised Kingdom of God
  - Jesus' offering to set up that Kingdom had a condition...it would come to pass for Israel only if they first obeyed the first half of Jesus' Gospel
    - They had to repent and believe in Jesus as their King before they could receive the Gospel
    - If the nation of Israel embraced Jesus as their Messiah in faith, then Jesus would give them the promised Kingdom
    - Literally, the 1,000-year Kingdom we're still waiting for would have arrived during Jesus' first coming had Israel believed
  - Obviously, that Kingdom didn't come, because Israel didn't receive Him

- Instead of setting up a kingdom, Jesus went to the cross
- Yet at this point Jesus' message made no reference to Him dying on the cross for our sins
- Later when Jesus did begin to share with His disciples about His coming death, it greatly confused them
  - They wondered how could Jesus be the Promised Messiah coming to rule all nations if He could be killed by Rome?
  - And how could the King die before His Kingdom was in place?
- The answer for when and why Jesus' message changed from Kingdom to cross must await our study of Matthew 12
  - So for now, Matthew moves to Jesus recruiting His disciples

**Matt. 4:18** Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

**Matt. 4:19** And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

**Matt. 4:20** Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

**Matt. 4:21** Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

**Matt. 4:22** Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

- This is all Matthew gives us about how Jesus selected His disciples
  - Later in chapter 10, Matthew records Jesus assigning twelve of His disciples to a special role called apostle
    - But for now Matthew simply says Jesus found men along the way in the Galilee
    - In v.18 Jesus calls two brothers from their fishing business on the Galilee, Simon and Andrew
    - And lo and behold, they just leave their nets and follow Jesus
  - Now when you read that, doesn't it sound strange to you?
    - It doesn't read like real life
    - Doesn't it sound as if they were hypnotized?

- Who drops everything in the middle of everyday life to begin a new life following someone around?
- My wife would say that's how I ended up with her, but for the rest of us, it doesn't sound like real life
- And nor should it, because that's not how this happened
  - Once again, Matthew is leaving out some important details we find in the other Gospels
  - Beginning with the important point that this isn't the first time Peter and Andrew met Jesus
  - In John's Gospel, we get the account of their first meeting
- Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, following John's ministry by the river Jordan along with John who wrote the Gospel of John
  - After John baptized Jesus, he told Andrew and John to follow stop following him and to start following Jesus
    - So Andrew and John left John the Baptist and started to follow Jesus
    - Soon after Andrew introduces Jesus to his brother, Simon
    - Jesus immediately changed Simon's name to Peter, which means Rock (today we would say Rocky)
    - Later Jesus called Philip, who lived near Andrew and Peter in the Galilee, and then later Philip introduced Jesus to Nathaniel
  - So one at a time, Jesus collected disciples around the Galilee
    - But it's important to remember that Jesus collected these men before Jesus had performed even a single miracle
    - John says these encounters happened shortly after Jesus was baptized, prior to the wedding in Cana
    - So these men were believing in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, and following Him based solely on Jesus' testimony
    - They were clearly operating in faith
  - Later, these disciples joined Jesus as guest at the wedding in Cana, probably because they had been invited too

- While at the wedding, John, Andrew and Peter witness Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine
- As they see this miracle, John reports their faith was confirmed and strengthened

**John 2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.**

- After this, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, and these same disciples join Him in Jerusalem
  - They followed Jesus probably because as Jewish men they were also required to attend the feast
  - So they traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem and on His return to the Galilee
  - They are also with Jesus when He has His encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria
- During all this time, John reports they called Jesus rabbi, or teacher
  - But they also called Him Christ, or Messiah
  - So they understood Jesus was the Messiah, but for them the Messiah was principally a rabbi or teacher
- In other words, it's unclear at first what these guys understood of the concept of Messiah much less what it would require of them personally
  - They were probably operating from what they knew of Israel's past
    - For example, when Moses came to Israel, the people accepted him as their leader and prophet and mediator of the Law
    - They revered him and respected him
    - Likewise, when Joshua was raised up or when David and Solomon ruled, the people recognized these leaders as sent by God
  - But in all these cases, the people of Israel still maintained their normal way of life
    - Just because Moses showed up, the people didn't cease in their trades

- Joshua's conquest of Canaan didn't change their family allegiances
- David's rise to the throne didn't require that people leave their homes and follow David around
- People didn't abandon their way of life when God sent a prophet or king...they simply accepted and served these men as they went about their daily lives
- Therefore, when these disciples met Jesus, they were certainly excited to receive Him and to know His Kingdom was at hand
  - They believed in Him, they listened to His teaching
  - They accompanied Him from time to time and they shared the news of His arrival with others
- But in the meantime, they still needed to make a living
  - They had bills to pay and had to put food on the table
  - So after the disciples returned with Jesus to the Galilee after the Passover, they simply returned to their fishing nets and boats
  - Meanwhile, Jesus continued traveling around the Galilee teaching in synagogues and drawing large crowds
- Then on this day, Jesus makes His way back to these men on the shores of the Galilee
  - According to Luke, Jesus teaches the crowds on the shore for a while with Jesus' disciples listening on
    - And then as we read in Matthew 4, Jesus suddenly turns to Andrew and Peter and James and John and says follow me
    - But this point, these men have already spent considerable time with Jesus
    - They believe in Him as the Messiah
    - They have seen the miracles that confirmed Jesus's claims
  - Moreover, they've had time to consider what Jesus has been teaching and what it means for them personally
    - So perhaps they were ready for this change

- Perhaps after being with Jesus, fishing just didn't seem as rewarding as it once did
- Perhaps they were already considering whether to ask Jesus if they could become His full-time students
- So Jesus asks these men to embark on a career change to become students of a rabbi
  - To follow a rabbi meant to enroll in the rabbi's personal academy, which meant pursuing a calling to be a rabbi yourself
  - Students of rabbis committed themselves to follow and obey the rabbi's teaching, after which the students would become rabbis
  - That's what Jesus is asking, and that's what these men agree to do in an instant, leaving behind their livelihood and identity
- But despite all that, doesn't their decision to leave suddenly seem hard to believe?
  - Well perhaps it would help you to know about one more detail Matthew left out
    - In Luke we learn that right before Jesus issued this call, He put on a little demonstration of His fishing ability

**Luke 5:4** When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

**Luke 5:5** Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets."

**Luke 5:6** When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;

**Luke 5:7** so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

**Luke 5:8** But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

**Luke 5:9** For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;

**Luke 5:10** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

**Luke 5:11** When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

- Now do you understand why these men were willing to drop everything to follow Jesus?
  - They knew Jesus was the Messiah, they had seen His miracles and heard the power of His teaching
    - But now they witness a firsthand demonstration of His authority to rule over all things, including the Creation
    - They've witnessed His divinity in a powerful new way
  - And only then does Jesus call them to make a new way of life serving Him as fishers of men
    - Jesus is calling them to flip their way of life upside down
    - These men fished the sea seeking earthly provision
    - They brought death to living things so they could enrich themselves
  - Now Jesus wants them to fish the land seeking heavenly provision
    - They would sacrifice themselves to bring eternal life to dead hearts
    - And in the face of Jesus' display of divine power, they felt compelled to make the change
- From my own personal experience in following and serving Christ, I can tell you can identify with this pattern and I suspect it's the same for most people
  - At some point we encounter Jesus...someone says come and see, and we meet our Messiah
    - We believe in His word even before we see evidence of His power and the depths of His wisdom
    - And then as we accompany Him in our daily life, we see our faith confirmed and strengthened by what we experience and what we learn
  - Then, on Monday morning we go back to our nets, so to speak, and for most of us this is where the path becomes a circle
    - We repeat this pattern regularly, and it's enough

- But for some of us, there's a growing sensation that following Jesus in this way isn't enough
- It's like the disciples sitting on that boat watching Jesus teaching crowds on the shore...it doesn't feel like we're close enough
- Our daily pursuits are no longer enough for us, and more importantly, they're no longer enough for Jesus
  - So we start to wonder if there's something more to our faith than Sunday mornings (Thursday nights)
  - And then at the right moment, the Lord brings us an example of His divine power, perhaps in a word, or some amazing work of grace in our life
  - The Lord fills our nets, as He did for Peter, and we come face-to-face with the power of God in our lives
- And at that moment, the Lord gives us a decision to make
  - Are we going to continue chasing the bounty of the world
  - Or are we going to serve the One who already owns everything?
  - Are we going to follow the Lord who can fill our nets anytime He desires?
  - Are we going to leave the world to serve Christ?
  - That's a call of ministry and when we hear it, our only response is turning away from whatever is holding us back to follow Jesus
- But notice when Jesus revealed His divine power to Peter, it provoked fear in the man
  - Peter instantly sensed his own sinfulness and unworthiness, as did his friends
    - Their sin weighed on their hearts
    - And they suddenly doubt they could even be in the presence of God much less serve Him
    - So in Luke's account, Peter tells Jesus to go away
  - Have you ever felt that way?
    - Have you ever felt unworthy of God's call? *Too sinful to be useful?*

- That God couldn't possibly have time for you, much less any need for you
- And so like Peter, in self-pity you tell the Lord to go away
- Let me share a secret...Peter was right...he wasn't worthy to serve God...none of us are
  - There's nothing in us that God needs, and we're certainly not equal to the work
  - But that's where grace comes in...God's unmerited favor
  - The love of God is so great that He doesn't just forgive us by calling us into a saving faith
  - He also overlooks our weaknesses and disqualifications to allow us to serve Him
- Think about who these men were...Peter, John, Andrew, James,
  - They were fishermen by trade
    - They likely had no formal education much less religious training
    - They were engaged in a profession that generally attracted rougher types
    - They probably shared in the various vices that accompanied men of this sort
  - So exactly what qualified them to serve the Messiah? The king of earth and heaven? God incarnate?
    - Absolutely nothing
    - In fact, they were likely the last men on earth someone might have assumed could be disciples of the Messiah
    - Yet the Lord selected these men from among all those He encountered from Jerusalem to the Galilee
  - Which simply demonstrates the Lord calls unqualified men and women to serve Him, men and women who know they have nothing to offer
    - The disciples were just the latest example this principle, but God always works this way

- God commonly selects the one you don't expect, the one who can't meet the standards, the one without the qualifications
- Men like Joseph, Gideon, David, Amos...people like us
- Why? Because then we're not confused about who's really doing the work
  - Because we won't try to compete with the Lord for His glory
  - Because in our weaknesses, the Lord is seen to be strong, as Paul says
- And think about how strong the Lord showed Himself through these men
  - Peter becomes the leader of the church in it's first days
    - He preaches sermons at Pentecost and before the leaders of Israel
    - He converted thousands in the city of Jerusalem and beyond
    - He bravely resisted the persecution of the Jewish leaders and he became the first to convert Gentiles
    - Eventually he accepted a martyr's death
  - The other men had similarly impressive records
    - James became the leader of the Jerusalem, ministering in the face of severe persecution and poverty until his early death as a martyr
    - Early church writings report that Andrew was the first to evangelize the Black Sea region of Georgia, Ukraine and Southern Russia and was also martyred on a cross
    - John was instrumental in ministering to the early church throughout the first century
    - Eventually he received the greatest revelation of the New Testament and recorded it in the book of that name
  - Can we imagine the church beginning without the work of these men?
    - How did they accomplish these things?
    - They didn't...Jesus did it through them

- What mattered wasn't their ability...it was their availability
- The Lord calls unqualified people, but He doesn't leave us untrained
  - The Lord spends three years with these men training them by His word and example
  - And then He gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them each day after Jesus departed
- He's given every believer the same things today
  - You who have been given saving faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through that faith, you also have the word of God
    - You have the record of what these men learned so you can learn it too
    - And you have also been given the deposit of the Holy Spirit
    - And so if you fear you have the same paltry qualifications these men had, have no fear
    - You have the same equipping they had too
  - Now the only question you have to answer is if you're going to drop your net?
    - Is God calling you to serve Him in some new and different way?
    - Perhaps to make more time to study His word, to spend time in the company of your fellow believers
    - Perhaps to devote more time, talent and treasure to the work of the church
    - Perhaps He's calling you to abandon your career, to turn your entire life upside down by leaving your nets in an instant
  - I can't tell you what He's calling you to do, but I can assure you of now thing
    - He's asking you to do something to follow Him
    - As you consider this word tonight, I hope you're humble and courageous enough to answer His question honestly