

Matthew Chapters 4:12-22 – Jesus Begins His Ministry

Review

So far, we have studied the narrative of Jesus' early and pre-ministry life. The information is limited in terms of information over a thirty-year period, but the information is significant. So far, the reader will see and be able to list why this information demonstrates that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

1. Line of David
2. Conceived by the Holy Spirit
3. Conceived and Born of a virgin
4. Gentiles recognize the Messiah
5. The false king Herod reacts to the threat of the Messiah
6. The Messiah is taken to and comes out of Egypt, following the path of Israel
7. Even though born in Bethlehem of the line of David, Jesus is raised in Nazareth, a despised area

John the Baptizer, a well-known and respected prophet, was preparing Israel for their Messiah King and to be ready and qualified to enter into the Kingdom of Messiah. Jesus came to John to be baptized.

Jesus was baptized for many reasons as identified in Scripture:

1. Identification – Jesus identified with both Israel and the sin of Israel. Israel needed to change their mind and fix their behavior to prepare themselves for their Messiah and the Kingdom of Heaven. The leaders of Israel, especially the King, interceded for and dealt with the sin of the people.
2. Identification of the Messiah by John
3. Identification of the Son by God the Father
4. Confirmation of the prophetic promises of the Hebrew Scripture (The Anointed One)
5. The Holy Spirit overtly and publicly anointing Jesus and remaining upon Him

The first thing that the Father had Jesus do at the beginning of His ministry was to prove Himself worthy by withstanding the temptation of the devil. The three temptations can be categorized as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the arrogant pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). Jesus did what Adam did not.

The Early Ministry of Jesus

Matthew 4:12-25 – This takes place after Jesus hears that John the Baptizer is taken into prison.

The other three accounts add more detail as to the timing of these events. If we look at the life of Jesus horizontally (Harmony of the Gospels), we will see that a few events that happen between His temptation and His return to Galilee.

The events in John 1-4 happen before the events in Matthew 4:12.

1. Jesus chose some disciples
2. Water into wine at Cana
3. Jesus goes to Jerusalem and cleanses the Temple at Passover
4. Questioning from and to Nicodemus
5. Jesus in Samaria

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How do we know this? Right after the baptism of Jesus, the disciples of John start following Him. In John 3:24, the testimony of John the Baptizer, it states that John had not yet been thrown into prison. John 4 seems to take place after John is taken into prison and Jesus takes up his mission. And before Jesus could be persecuted, He leaves Judea and goes into Galilee (John 4:3). It was during the trip back to Galilee that Jesus goes to Sychar and talks with the woman at the well. In John 4:43, we have Jesus going into Galilee.

Why does Matthew not deal with these points? We need to remember the purpose of Matthew and the purpose of John.

John wrote down the signs of Jesus so that the world would believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and in believing would have eternal life. John records when people believed in him (John 1:35-37, 47-49, 2:11, 22-23, 4:25-26, 29, 39-42).

Matthew writes to present Jesus to Israel as the Messiah of Israel who is to restore Israel. Matthew's writings are not concerned with the world's response. If I had to guess, Matthew and John understood this about each other's writings. Matthew keeps referring to the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophetic words and parallels that Jesus is fulfilling. After Jesus demonstrates that He is a worthy King by using the Word of God to withstand the temptation of the devil, Matthew deals with another prophetic utterance.

Matthew 4:12 – After Jesus heard that John was in prison, He went to Galilee. Where was Jesus when this happened? He was in Judea. Before the Father would permit Jesus to be crucified, Jesus needed to fulfill His earthly mission, and this strategic retreat to Galilee also fulfilled what Isaiah foretold.

Matthew 4:13 – To see what happened in Nazareth, we go to Luke 4:16-31. Matthew states that Jesus coming to Capernaum and settling there around the Sea of Galilee fulfills an important prophecy.

Matthew 4:13-16 – In Isaiah 1-8, Isaiah is prophesying against Jerusalem; both Judah and Israel (Northern Kingdom) are being warned with Israel coming into judgment during the time of Isaiah. Judah is to watch and see the judgment of the Lord against Israel and not fall into the same error. In this midst of judgment and gloom, there is also given a prophecy of hope (Isaiah 8:19-9:7).

Messianic Jews understood that when Messiah comes, He must go to Galilee to proclaim to the Jews who are in Gentile-controlled areas. The northern lands will be blessed when Messiah comes because He will not remain in Judah exclusively but will shine a light for the areas of Israel that are characterized by rebellion, idolatry, and darkness.

This prophetic fulfillment is lost if we do not understand both the significance of the rebellion in Zebulun and Naphtali and the greatness of this prophecy.

Matthew 4:17 – Jesus takes up the message of John because John is in prison. *From that time* (ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο) is only used twice in the New Testament; the other is in Matthew 16:21. The purpose of Matthew 4:17-Matthew 16:20 is that Jesus proclaims and offers the kingdom of heaven to Israel. In the context of Matthew 16, Jesus proclaims His death on the cross and His resurrection. The message of the kingdom (mentioned 11 times after 16:21) still continues, but His crucifixion becomes the focus.

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Matthew 4:18-22 – Matthew backtracks to the calling of four disciples. This happened prior to verse 12. Jesus, after His baptism and temptation, was followed by at least 6 disciples (Philip and Nathanael) before Cana and the trip to Jerusalem at the Passover. In Luke 6, well after the initial ministry in Galilee, we see the naming of the twelve before the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:12-20).