

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

Matthew 4:12-17 | The Great Light

May 22, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 4.
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We have spent the last four weeks learning about the three specific temptations of Jesus.

We learned that these three are representative of all the temptations that we, ourselves, will face.

So I'd like to take a moment to review what each temptation of Jesus has taught us personally.

First Temptation

1. "Temptation" has a different meaning in Greek = Peirasmós (per-ahz-mos) doesn't just mean to "trick into evil." It's a neutral word that can be used as a testing for good or a temptation for evil. And we don't know the outcome until we're through the trial.
2. Jesus had the ability to sin, or He's not truly human.

Second Temptation:

1. We don't test God. God is the one who does the testing.
2. Test your motives—not God.
3. Satan implied that God is trustworthy only when he rescues us from suffering and danger. We could also say it this way. Satan suggests that God is good only when life is good. And that's a lie because God is good all the time.

Third Temptation:

1. As Jesus continued to say “no” to Satan, he said “yes” to suffering.
2. Temptations that have been anticipated and prayed against have little power over us.
3. Human resistance (white knuckling/sheer grit apart from God) only intensifies the pleasure of the sin when we finally give into it.
4. ~~Resistance~~: Confession is a Biblical way to resist sin.

Lastly, we saw how Jesus overcame each temptation with two powers.

1. The power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1)
2. And the power of God’s Word (“It is written”).

And it is with these same powers we, too, can overcome our temptations.

If you missed any of those sermons, they are on the website—along with my notes for download.

INTRODUCTION:

Today we have a seismic shift in our narrative. *About Jesus,*

Things are very different today in the life of Jesus *|* than in the Temptation story.

Matthew shows us how Jesus officially starts his ministry of saving the lost.

But something happens.

Actually, many things happen in Jesus' life that Matthew doesn't record *[* as we shift from the Temptation narrative in the desert *]* to Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

What are these things? *Just happen?* And how do these impact you?

Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:12-17 CSB

Matthew 4:12— When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

Matthew 4:13— He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Matthew 4:14— This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

Matthew 4:15— Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

Matthew 4:16— The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.

Matthew 4:17— From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near."

***This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 4:12— When Jesus heard that John (The Baptizer) had been arrested, Jesus withdrew into Galilee.

Here is the abrupt transition/seismic shift from Matthew in verse twelve.

And the sudden change is due to a time-lapse.

There is a pretty large time gap between verse 11 of last week and verse 12 of this week.

This omission could be anywhere from 9-12 months.

So that's a pretty significant piece of Jesus' life that Matthew doesn't record.

If Jesus' ministry is only three years, why doesn't Matthew record nearly a third of it?

A couple of thoughts:

1. Please keep in mind that Matthew is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit led Matthew to omit this portion of Jesus' life.
2. ~~Another reason that Matthew doesn't~~ ^{IT} could be the fact that these events don't directly relate to Jesus ^{AS} being the King of kings.

Jesus, as King, is the lens through which Matt writes this Gospel.

But, here's the good news—

We don't have to look far for the missing timeframe because John's Gospel tells us everything we need to know.

As you can imagine, Jesus did a lot of things within the next year after He recovered from his fast and overcame Satan's temptations.

So I will give us a high-level overview of these things from John's Gospel.

This is so cool because John's Gospel picks up the story from Matthew 4:11.

So if you want to flip from Matthew's Gospel over to John, let me walk you through what happens during this year.

Starting in John chapter one, after the prologue, John immediately picks up where Matthew left off in verse 11.

- John 1:19-34—John the Baptizer explains to the Scribes and Pharisees about Jesus.
- John 1:35-51—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Nathaniel all meet Jesus for the first time.
- John 2:1-12—Jesus performs his first miracle at the Wedding in Cana. Jesus did that miracle for the disciples, but the wedding party also benefited.
- John 2:13-25—Jesus cleanses and purifies the Temple. Jesus introduces Himself to the religious leaders by taking charge of the Temple. Most certainly a way to make a first impression.
- John 3:1-21—Jesus meets with Nicodemus after all the commotion at the Temple.
- John 3:22-36—Amazing text because we see John the Baptizer's ministry and Jesus' ministry overlap. They are working side by side. But, John's the get jealous of Jesus because Jesus' disciples are baptizing more than them. Competition in ministry! The more things change, the more they stay the same!
- John 4:1-26—Jesus meets the Samaritan Woman at the Well and tells her that He is God!
- John 4:27-44—Jesus stays with the Samaritans and ministers to them.
- John 4:43-54—Jesus performs his first healing miracle during His second trip to Cana.

So those nine events took place over the past year—and it's right here where Matthew picks up the story.

Matthew 4:12— When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

It's amazing to me the humanity of Jesus.

Jesus laid aside His divinity to be tested as a human being, like you and me.

And here, in verse twelve, we see more of Jesus' humanity.

Matthew 4:12— *When Jesus heard...*

Jesus heard the news about John's arrest just like everyone else.

He didn't use his divine powers to know anything ahead of time.

On those few occasions that Jesus did, it was because the Father revealed it to Him.

In this case, the Father didn't tell Jesus that John was arrested.

Jesus heard this tragic news through the grapevine.

Matthew 4:12— *When Jesus heard that John had been arrested...*

John was arrested by Herod Antipas.

John was thrown into a dungeon at Machaerus (mac-kier-us).

Machaerus is a fortified castle on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea—it sits on the border of Galilee.

Machaerus is not named in the Scriptures.

But Josephus, not only a Jewish historian, but also the governor of Galilee for a time, explicitly states that John was imprisoned and executed at Machaerus ([*Antiquities* 18.116–19](#)).

The name Machaerus literally means “sword.”

Question: Why was John thrown into prison in the first place?

He got himself involved in some political drama.

Long story short, Herod Antipas stole his half-brother's wife, Herodias.

Let that sink in.

Scribe
I'm not sure why people watch television when there is much more drama in the Word of God.

Fiction has nothing on God's Word!

Think About It
Herod Antipas is committing incestuous adultery—and he's ruling and reigning over the Jews—and he's not even a Jew himself.

And John called Herod out on his sin—not once but continually. (Matthew 14:3–4)

John was not scared of Herod Antipas.

John calls sin—sin.

It's not a mistake. It's not “oops, sorry I did that again.”

And just like Jesus, *The Truth* it will cost John his life as we study Matthew's Gospel.

Continuing
Matthew 4:12— When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

So we learned from John's Gospel that Jesus spent about a year traveling around Israel.

He spent some time in Judea, where the city of Jerusalem is located.

He also spent time in Samaria.

~~The disciples were not happy about that.~~

Question: Why did Jesus have to withdraw from these areas? Was he afraid? Did he lack courage?"

No, He left the southern part of Israel because His work was finished for a short time.

Jesus knew that his popularity was growing with the people, but at the same time, resentment was also cultivating among the Religious leaders.

Jesus withdrew because He didn't want a premature crisis to happen so early in the His ministry.

What we see here is the divine timing of God the Father.

Keep in mind that Jesus is perfectly obedient to the Father.

And as we go through Matthew's Gospel, we'll see how Jesus inherently understands that He is on a divine timeframe.

And it's at this moment that Jesus' introduction to Israel is over, and a new chapter begins with His official ministry.

Because John's ministry is ending.

John even confirms it...

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

So it's at this moment, that we see a new chapter of Jesus' ministry begin.

+ **Matthew 4:12**— ...he withdrew into Galilee.

Why Galilee?

Many of you have maps at the back of your Bible.

You'll notice that Galilee is in the northern part of Israel, Samaria is in the middle, while Judea is in the southern.

The city of Jerusalem is in Judea.

So if we compare Israel to Arizona geographically, Phoenix would be Jerusalem, and Cottonwood is Galilee.

Cottonwood is a melting pot of sorts for people, but Galilee is much more.

At this time, Galilee was racially and religiously diverse.

And it's this diversity that the hotshots in Judea and within the city of Jerusalem didn't care for the people in Galilee.

We see this attitude most notably when Peter denied Christ as Jesus was being questioned and interrogated in Matthew 26:69.

All of Galilee was an international and interracial cosmopolitan.

Surprisingly, Galilee was more of a crossroads than Jerusalem.

Galilee was not a large territory.

It was about fifty miles from north to south and about twenty-five miles across.

There were ^{over 200} ~~204~~ cities in Galilee.

The population of each city was around 15,000 people.

So we're looking at over three million people in this small area!

There was also a famous highway/trade route that ran through Galilee.

It was called “the way of the sea.”

This superhighway ran through Galilee from Damascus to the Mediterranean coast and then down to Egypt.

It’s like taking I-17 to Phoenix and I-10 all the way to Florida.

One ancient writer said that Judea was on the way to nowhere, whereas Galilee was on the way to everywhere.

So at this point, we have two questions:

1. “How did northern Israel become so different than southern Israel.”
2. Why is Jesus specifically going to Galilee?

Matthew 4:13— *He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea...*

Nazareth was Jesus’ hometown.

It was a tiny village that many people despised.

Nathanael asked Phillip, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46)

Now, it’s at this point where Jesus makes an important strategic decision by moving his ministry headquarters from Nazareth to Capernaum.

Why would Jesus do this?

Jesus grew up in Nazareth. Why not stay there with all his friends and family?

In Luke's Gospel, we learn that Jesus was preaching in Nazareth, and His preaching was so good that they turned on Him and tried to kill Him. (Luke 4:16-30).

That's when you know you've preached a good sermon!

So it's by divine providence, that the Father moves Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum using this event.

We've talked about the area of Galilee - let's now talk about the city of Capernaum.
Now, Capernaum is a much larger city, than Nazareth.

It's known as a fishing hub.

It had lots of buying and selling, trading with small businesses.

Capernaum had a Roman military unit that was present.

So by Jesus choosing Capernaum as his new ministry headquarters and hometown,

Jesus had access to a lot of new people—both Jews and Gentiles.

The name, Capernaum, means “village of Nahum.” (Nay-um)

So Capernaum may have been named for that OT prophet.

But Nahum also means “compassion,”

So there's a possibility that the village was named after its compassionate people.

But we don't know for sure.

Regardless, by the first century, Capernaum is a booming city.

Capernaum is two miles west of the Jordan River.

It was a beautiful city.

Capernaum is where Matthew had his tax booth (Matt. 9:9).

Capernaum is where Jesus performs eight, possibly nine miracles.

Those are all benefits as to why Jesus moved to Capernaum, but Scripture tells us the primary reason.

Matthew 4:13—He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. (Naf-tuh-lee)

Matthew 4:14— This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

So Matthew is going to paraphrase the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 8:22-9:1/2)

In verse 15, we will see Matthew call this area of Galilee "*Galilee of the Gentiles.*"

Now keep in mind that Galilee is in Israel— a Jewish nation.

A Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew—they are not a Believer in the One True Living God, YWHW.

Gentiles are pagan nonbelievers.

So why would Matt call the Jewish land of Galilee, "*Galilee of the Gentiles?*"

The short answer is that there are millions of Gentiles living there.

And they shouldn't be.

The book of Judges tells us that the Israelite people did not obey God when He told them to drive out all these pagan people from that land.

Why would give God give that kind of command?

Isn't that kind of unloving?

No, God gave them this command because He knew that they would bring all their false and fake gods into the land, eventually tempting the Israelites to worship these false religions.

The history of the Old Testament certainly demonstrates this.

So let's look at Matt's paraphrase of Isaiah 9:1

Matthew 4:15— Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, (Naf-tuh-lee) along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

Why on Earth would Matthew quote this verse as Jesus starts His new ministry in Capernaum?

The history of Zebulun and Naphtali takes us all the way back to Joshua. ^{Moses}

Zebulun and Naphtali are two of the twelve tribes of Israel.

And both tribes failed to purge all of the Canaanites from their land.

So these Jews started to intermarry with pagans—just like God said.

They had mixed marriages and a synchronistic faith—the blending and mixing in of all the world's pagan religions. ^{together}

In the history of Israel, these two tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, were rebellious and unfaithful. ^{Continuously}

The book of 2 Kings shows that after the Jews were evicted from the northern part of Israel, all these foreigners flooded into Galilee. (2 Kings 15:29 and 17:24–27)

Egyptians, Arabians, Phoenicians, and Greeks all moved into this area, where God gave these two Jewish tribes their homeland.

What's all that mean?

It means that people who don't have a clue about God took over and displaced God's people.

~~The land of Zebulun is Nazareth.~~

because the land of Zebulun is Nazareth.
Capernaum is now Naphtali in the first century.

This entire area is now called "Galilee of the Gentiles."

And it just so happens that this is the exact area where Jesus is now living.

Wow, what a coincidence!

So verse fifteen tells us about the location of the people, and now verse sixteen tells us about the people living there.

**Matthew 4:16— The people who live in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those living in the land of the shadow of death,
a light has dawned.**

Both the Jews and the Gentiles living in Galilee are *living in darkness*.

The picture in verse 16 shows that they are sitting in it.

This area of Galilee—is filled with millions of people living in the shadow of death.

The big picture is that these people are oblivious to the dangers and hopelessness of life.

Let's turn to Isaiah's Words to get a fuller understanding of what is taking place.

This is the Scripture passage that Matthew paraphrases:

+ **Isaiah 8:22**— They (Jews) will look toward the earth and see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction, and they will be driven into thick darkness.

+ **Isaiah 9:1**—Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the future he will bring honor to the way of the sea, to the land east of the Jordan, and to Galilee of the nations.

It's amazing that Isaiah also quotes that highway that runs through Galilee.

+ **Isaiah 9:2**—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.

So the decision by Jesus to move to Galilee— fulfills Isaiah's prophecy!

Isaiah was written 500-700 years before Jesus was even born. —Dangb

Now we can't help but notice how Matthew juxtaposes light and darkness.

One day these Galilean people are walking around in spiritual darkness...

And then the next day, BAM!

Jesus, the light of the world, walks into this land filled with depravity and death.

And everything changes

Matthew 4:17— From then on...

"From then on/From that time"— marks a significant turning point. Matthew ties something new to Jesus' ministry.

What's the turning point?

Jesus begins to preach.

And not only does Jesus begin his preaching ministry, but he also starts where John the Baptizer left off.

Matthew 4:17— From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near."

In other words, Jesus was proclaiming a message nobody wanted to hear.

Preach → kēryssō (kay-ru-so) —to proclaim, to make known, to herald a message.

Preaching was the primary mode of ministry before Jesus was arrested.

It wasn't small groups.

It wasn't this concept of discussing endless philosophy.

Jesus wasn't focused on social justice issues either.

His primary method of ministry was preaching and teaching.

What was the title of this first sermon?

“Repent.”

In other words, “be converted.”

Repentance includes a change in every aspect of our life.

There’s a turning from who we used to be.

We are to turn around 180 degrees, leave our life of wickedness and pursue a life of holiness.

Repentance means changing our orientation.

We are to stop thinking the way we’ve always thought.

We are to stop doing the things that we've always done.

If we’re thieves, we are to stop stealing from others.

If we drink too much, we are to pursue sobriety.

If we are workaholics, we are to find rest. *- And to trust God in His provisions.*

If we watch pornography, we are to stop abusing people by living in sexual dysfunction and strive toward healthy relationships.

To repent of sin means that there is a change in perception, opinions, and worldview.

Everything changes when we repent and are converted.

The changes don’t happen overnight.

The changes are incredibly slow and painful.

But we are to join God where He is leading us in this process.

God will start small with these changes and walk slowly with us.

Why should we repent?

Matthew 4:17— ...because the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Tragically, Israel did not repent—they were not converted.

Nor did they recognize Jesus as their King.

As we continue studying Matthew's Gospel, we'll learn that the literal, physical *Kingdom of Heaven* is where Jesus rules and reigns as King— was set aside for a short period of time—

Because the Jews killed Jesus instead of crowning Him.

We're living in that time period today.

We call it the Church Age (Acts 2 - Rapture)
Jesus is not ruling the nation of Israel. today

Nor is He ruling the world as He will one day.

But Jesus does rule and reign in the lives of people who believe.

In other words, at this moment, the Kingdom of Heaven is a spiritual Kingdom.

The world doesn't have peace,

But those who have been converted do so.

The world doesn't know joy.

But those who have repented are swimming in it.

The world doesn't know grace.

But those who are called children of God receive it.

The world doesn't know truth.

But the saints living in the Kingdom of Heaven have tasted it.

We are currently living in the tension between these two times.

Because the Kingdom of Heaven is already here, but not yet entirely.

It's like we have one foot in heaven and one on earth.

Yes, we are citizens of heaven where Jesus is King, but we still have a mailing address here on earth.

PREACH:

I can't help but think about how the *Galilee of the Gentiles* is so similar to the Verde Valley.

They had all sorts of religions, cults, fake gods, and false religions.

And yet, has anything changed in 2,000 years?

In our own backyard, we have devil worship in Jerome.

We have all sorts of New Age in Sedona.

In Clarkdale, Cottonwood and Cornville, we either have all sorts of false beliefs mixed into Christianity—

Or, nobody gives a rip about Christ at all.

So we, too, live in a time of spiritual darkness.

But the difference between the Galileans and us is that there was only one light named Jesus in the first century...

But now, there are thousands of lights in the Verde Valley—called the Church.

Have you ever noticed that when we lose electricity and you have to light a candle, how much light that candle provides?

One moment you're sitting in a room that's entirely dark.

But the moment you light one little candle, it illuminates the whole room.

That's the picture that God gives us when the apostle John writes:

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Who's the Word?

John 1:4—*In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

John 1:5—*That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.*

What's all this mean for us today?

It's pretty amazing how all the darkness in a room can't swallow a little candle.

Well, think about what happens when all those little candles gather together. It's called the church.

Next Sunday, we're going to see Jesus start giving His light away by calling his first sets of disciples.

In the meantime, I'd like to encourage you to share your light with someone this week.



PRAY/Benediction:

Father, we rejoice in your greatness and power,
your gentleness and love,
your mercy and justice.

We praise You because you are the light of the world.

We pray that you prepare us by your Spirit
to honor you in our thoughts,
and words and actions,
and to serve you in every aspect of our lives this week.

We continue to pray for God Intersections and Divine disruptions to our own lives,
so that we may be a small part in spreading Your light to others.

All God's people said, **Amen.**

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SERMONS:

Tom Nelson, Denton Bible Church. Matthew 4:12-25

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