

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW; YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH

Week 10 - JROC – Galilee of the Gentiles

March 20, 2022

Matt. 4:13 - ...*He/Jesus departed to Galilee.* What do we know about Galilee?

In the time of Christ, Galilee was the northernmost of the three provinces of Israel, above Samaria in the middle and Judea in the south. The region of Galilee was a fertile, progressive, highly populated region. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian and citizen of Rome, recorded there were approx. 3 million people populating Galilee. Galilee was predominately Gentile in its population but with a large number of Jewish cities and citizens.

Upper Galilee is sometimes referred to as “Galilee of the Gentiles” in Scripture (Matt. 4:16), probably because it hosted various non-Jewish inhabitants. Jewish people living in other parts of Israel considered the Galileans as backward/unsophisticated people (John 7:52). Jesus’ boyhood years were spent in Nazareth, a town in Lower Galilee. Several major roadways of the Roman Empire crossed through Galilee. From the Galilee of the Gentiles came the launching of a strategic mission field for the gospel message into the world – the Gentile world.

Matt. 4:12b-16 – From Samaria, Jesus... *departed to Galilee.* ¹³ *And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,* ¹⁴ *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:* ¹⁵ *‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:’* ¹⁶ *The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’*

Matt. 4:13 - *And leaving Nazareth,*

Matthew very briefly and rather cryptically informs his readers that Jesus left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum.

And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt (Jesus went to Galilee, left Nazareth, and is now DWELLING [to settle; to inhabit]) *in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,...* Both Nazareth and Capernaum were in the region of Galilee. Capernaum was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. What happened in Nazareth that Jesus had to leave?

Returning to...

Luke 4:14-30 - *Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.* ¹⁵ *And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. So (until?) He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up (familiarity leading to a lack of honor [?]). While in Nazareth...as His custom was,* (perhaps as a young boy) *He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.* ¹⁷ *And He was handed the book/scroll of the prophet Isaiah. And when*

He had opened the book/scroll, He found the place where it was written (Isa. 61:1-2):
18 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed (schmeered with oil) Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.' 20 Then He closed the

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book/scroll, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down (Rabbis sat down to teach). And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.' (healing of a nobleman's son [John 4:46-54])" 24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

The people were rejecting His word and demanding demonstrations through miracles to prove His Messiahship. Jesus reminded His Jewish brethren that Elijah the prophet spoke to Israel of impending judgment and called the people to repentance. The only one who received any benefit from Elijah's preaching was a Gentile widow (widow of Zarephath) whose obedience to God was evidence of her faith. Israel received no benefit. (I Kings 17).

Jesus further conveyed that in the time of Elisha the prophet there were many lepers in Israel. BUT Israel did not respond positively to Elisha's message regarding the one true God of Israel. The only one who received help from Elisha's ministry was Naaman, the Syrian, the Gentile (Lk. 4:27), who was cleansed/healed from his leprosy. In the Hebrew Scripture we read of NO Jewish leper being healed of his/her leprosy. (Remember this as we're going to consider the results of this fact in two weeks). Jesus' lesson was clearly understood by those in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus likened them to Israelites who responded in unbelief to the messages from God through OT prophets.

28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. 30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way. It was not yet Jesus' time. Jesus was on a timetable! The people at the synagogue in Nazareth desired His miracles and rejected His claims as the Messiah.

Matt. 4:13 – *and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,...* WHY would Jesus NOT choose to make His home in Jerusalem or Judea? Wouldn't that have been a wiser choice?

WE ARE READING MUCH MORE THAN A CHANGE OF LOCATION FOR JESUS!!!!!!!

Matt. 4:13 mentions Zebulun and Naphtali and then quotes this passage from...

Isaiah 9:1-2: - *Nevertheless the gloom (the darkness) will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her (best translation: will glorify her), by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.*

Zebulun and Naphtali – two of the twelve tribes of Israel – on the northern border in NE Galilee west of the Jordan River. Capernaum was located on the border between Zebulun and Naphtali along the Sea of Galilee.

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Isaiah had prophesied in that remote location that LIGHT would shine to those in darkness. Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to suffer from the invasion by the Assyrian King (II Kings 15:29) which some say marked the beginning of the dark days for Israel.

And, because God fulfills His word, approx. 800 years later the Messiah, the LIGHT of the world, traveled to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali in the Galilee of the Gentiles.

The LIGHT of the world brought LIGHT to the Galilee of the Gentiles....

Isa. 49:5-6 – *And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob (Israel) back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him...⁶ Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'* Ultimately Isa. 9:1-2 would be fulfilled at the physical Second Coming of Jesus when the land will be free from foreign invaders.

Matt. 4:17 – *From that time Jesus began to preach (to proclaim) and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*

From that time... when Jesus was in Capernaum in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali. This is when and where Jesus began to preach. In Galilee Jesus began to preach. The Gk. word for preach means to proclaim after the manner of a herald – to proclaim openly with formality and authority.

God required that Israel repent as a nation for the coming kingdom of God to be established. And, who is typically over a kingdom? A KING!

And now Jesus is echoing John's message, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand/has drawn near* – because the King was in their midst.

In both John's message and in Jesus' message, the emphasis was to move the people to repentance by announcing that the promised covenanted kingdom was near, upon them – because the King was here. Jesus!

Jesus was officially presenting Himself as the Davidic King – promised to Israel through the Davidic Covenant between God and Israel (I Kings 7:12-16).

Not once is the kingdom offered to Israel as anything but an earthly, literal kingdom.

Matt. 4:23 - *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

Gospel means “good news.”

What is “the gospel of the kingdom”? The good news of the kingdom.

John 3:3 – entrance into the kingdom was only through being born again!

What do we read in I Cor. 15:1-4?

There are those who quote Matt. 4:23...

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel and healing....

WHY? Why is *of the kingdom* not included in quoting Matt. 4:23?

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To whom was Matthew writing? Do you think that the Jewish people were hoping for the kingdom that God had promised them (II Sam. 7:16)?

Might there have been the hope of the kingdom that God had promised the Jewish people?

Isa. 35:5-6 – Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah, when He would come and establish the kingdom, would heal... *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.*