



Alabama Gulf Coast Christian Academy

Guest Speaker: Ray Reynolds (Gulf Shores, AL)

Thursday, February 7, 2013

Text: Matthew 4:12-17

Introduction: Our reading today, **Matthew 4:12-17**, must be considered chronologically. **John 1-4** occurs after Jesus' temptation. So a lot took place prior to his public preaching ministry. But when he "went public," where did he go? Galilee! Why? Galilee was cosmopolitan and very open to change for four basic reasons:

- 1) Encircled by Gentiles [thus, *Galilee of the Gentiles*]: North = the Syrians; West = the Phoenicians; South = the Samaritans; East = the sea. *Galilee* actually comes from the Hebrew *gilil*, meaning "circle."
- 2) Great roads of the world past through this 50 X 25 mile territory. A saying: "Judaea is on the way to nowhere: Galilee is on the way to everywhere. Imagine the ideas that came around."
- 3) Known for its fertile agriculture, Galilee was extremely populated. Josephus suggested that there were 204 villages in Galilee with no less than 15,000 in population. [that's 3,060,000].
- 4) Originally assigned to Naphtali and Zebulun, Canaanites were never completely expelled. Therefore, its population was always mixed.

The Holy Spirit described them as a people that "...sat in darkness..." (**Acts 26:18**) and "...sat in the region and shadow of death..." literally "in the land of black shadow" (**Psalm 23:4**). However, Jesus takes the time to visit this region, preach, teach, and perform miracles. Jesus chose to make a difference! If we intend to be like Him, and make a difference, we need to take a closer look....

Discussion:

I. A "Man" Came Into The Region

It should be no surprise that His name means, "Savior" (**Matthew 1:21**). **Isaiah 9:1-6** is the passage quoted in our context.

The invasion of Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser was especially severe on Naphtali and Zebulun. They were to the extreme north and among the first to experience the blow, but, there was hope! Note the titles and remember this was the passage the Holy Spirit used to describe Jesus going into Galilee: "...Wonderful Counsellor...Mighty God...Everlasting Father...Prince of Peace..."! What a great name!

Have you ever thought about the difference Jesus makes in the lives of the people he meets [i.e. apostles, Legion, Mary]? This was what he came to do (**John 6:51; 8:12; 10:9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6** cf. **Acts 2:36; 3:13; 4:10-12; 5:42; 8:5,35; 9:20**).

II. A "Method" Was Employed By Him

Preaching and teaching and heralding the message of the king.

Why preaching? Why not magic or signs? Think of the tricks Jesus could have performed (**Matthew 11:4-6**). Why not a carnival show of mind reading or fortune telling? No one can do it the way Jesus did (**Matthew 12:40**). Why not direct revelation (**Matthew 17:5**)? Yet, preaching has fallen on "hard times." (**II Timothy 4:1-4**).

Remember Paul (**II Corinthians 10:10; 11:6**). Remember Jesus (**Isaiah 59:1,2; John 8:14-16**). Remember that God had only one Son, he came as a preacher. Jesus lived only one life and he lived preaching (**Mark 16:15; Romans 1:15,16; Romans 10:14,15; I Corinthians 15:1,2; II Timothy 4:2**).

III. A "Message" Was Proclaimed By Him

And what a message! For those who are crying for something different; for those who need to make a change; for those who need to make some personal changes...listen carefully to what Jesus had to say. Remember, his was a message that brought with it *light* to those in darkness and the hope of eternal *life* to those in the shadow of death!

He had a specific, two point sermon: Point One: "...*Repent ye..*" -- lit. "change the way you think." But how were they thinking (**Acts 17:19-21**)? Jesus gave them something to specifically think about/look forward to. Point Two: "...*the kingdom of heaven is at hand..*" Remember the *sum* of God's word is truth (**Psalms 119:160**). They should have been reading and ready!

To those so given to change Jesus said, "Zero in, get focused. Think about the church that is on the horizon." NOTE: same message John the baptizer preached to those who were against change, the Pharisees (**Matthew 3:1-7**). To those who didn't want change and to those who were open to change, the message was the same: "change the way you are thinking and think about the church!" **Mark 1:14-15; Ephesians 3:3-6** remind us that it's gospel, the greatest news of all time! The greatest story ever told!

Conclusion: When we read about how Jesus made a difference, we should want to become like Him. We should want to make a difference in the world we live. We should want to reach those around us. What are you doing to make a mark? What are you doing to make a difference?

This message was adapted from a sermon entitled, "Jesus Made a Difference" by Dan Winkler from the Huntingdon Church of Christ (Huntingdon, TN).