

(Matt. 4:12) - As Matthew was led of the Spirit to record the Lord's life on earth as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy for the sake of the Jews, he was inspired to pick up a year later following the events recorded up to Matthew 4:11. The Apostle John was inspired by the Spirit to record the events of that year in John 1:19–4:2. After spending the initial year of His public ministry in Judea, and following a brief visit to Samaria (John 4:4-42), our Lord began His Galilean ministry (cf. John 4:3,43). Galilee was predominately Gentile in its population, but with a large number of Jewish cities and citizens.

(Matt. 4:13-16) - The Lord left His hometown of Nazareth because the people rejected Him (Luke 4:16-30). He settled in Capernaum where Matthew lived (Matt. 9:1-12). Peter also had a house in Capernaum (Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:29; 2:1). Here we can see and appreciate the sovereign providence of God operating in our Lord's life on earth. The Good Shepherd not only gives His life for His sheep to redeem them and establish the ground of their salvation (His righteousness imputed), He also seeks and finds them to give them spiritual life and bring them to Himself for their salvation (John 10:11-16). Here, Matthew records the fulfillment of a prophecy from Isaiah 9:1-2. These people *"which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."* The Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Light, has come to this region, largely populated by Gentiles, and Isaiah predicted this of the Messiah. *"Darkness"* and *"the shadow of death"* speak of the spiritual condition of all of us by nature as we fell by Adam into a state of sin, spiritual death, and depravity. Our only hope of salvation is to be given spiritual life and light from the God of all grace. The majority of the people of Capernaum did not realize what a blessing it was that Christ, the Light of the world, dwelt for a time in their midst. Man by nature hates the light of Christ (John 3:19-20). Christ later pronounced judgment upon Capernaum for their unbelief (Matt. 11:20-24). But the Lord had some sheep in that place. He came to redeem them, and He called them and brought them to Himself for salvation.

(Matt. 4:17) - God's Word places great importance on the necessity of preaching His Word (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-15; 1 Cor. 1:17-18,21; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). It is significant to note that the Lord preached the same message as John (Matt. 3:2). Repentance is the gift of God that comes to us by the gift of faith in Christ (Php. 3:7-9). Both are the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth where He gives spiritually dead sinners spiritual life, a new heart, and the light (truth) to those who sit in darkness. This is when a sinner is brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry through the Gospel in the power of the Spirit. Christ preached that *"the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* - the spiritual kingdom of God ushered in and established by the coming of the Messiah. It is not a physical, earthly kingdom as the unbelieving Jews expected. It is the kingdom of God's elect, justified by His grace in Christ, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and brought into the kingdom by new birth (John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13).

(Matt. 4:18-22) - Here, Christ calls out some of His disciples. As recorded in John 1:35-42, they had already been brought to see that Jesus was the Son of God Who had come in fulfillment of the Messianic promises and the Old Testament types. This is when Christ called them to leave their professions and follow Him in a full-time commitment. The Lord said, *"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."* Mark stated as follows - *"Come ye after Me, and I will make you TO BECOME fishers of men."* This calling was for their training and preparation to be preachers of Christ and His Gospel for the salvation of sinners. We see the

power of Christ in His Word as these disciples *“IMMEDIATELY left the ship and their father, and followed Him”* (cf. Luke 5:11).

(Matt. 4:23) - The Lord went throughout Galilee openly and publicly teaching and preaching *“in their synagogues”* (religious gatherings of Jews and Gentiles who had converted to Judaism), and *“healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”* As a teacher, He taught the how the Old Testament Scriptures testified of Him in the glory of His Person (God manifest in the flesh) and in the accomplishment and power of His redeeming work (His blood and righteousness as the ground of salvation) (Luke 24:27,44-47; John 5:39-47). As a preacher, His message was *“the Gospel of the Kingdom.”* This is the message of God’s free and sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based upon the merits of His shed blood, the very righteousness of God which He had come to fulfill. It is the message of God’s electing, justifying, redeeming, regenerating, and preserving grace that secures the salvation of all whom God the Father has given to God the Son incarnate (John 6:37-45). It is the message of God’s sovereign love, mercy, and grace to a people of His choice, and who are made known the calling of the Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel whereby they are brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:17-22; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-17; 2 Tim. 1:8-11). As a healer, He demonstrated His power to cure every disease and ailment which pointed to His power to cure the awful disease of sin in the salvation of His people.

It is important that we understand that the miracles of Jesus on, especially the miracle of healing the sick and raising the dead as in the case of Lazarus, were not ends in and of themselves. The ultimate goal of His life on earth, as God manifest in the flesh, was to fulfill all righteousness for the eternal and spiritual healing of His people. The physical miracles were important, but they were not His main ministry and goal. John referred to these miracles as signs (John 20:30). The miracles, especially the miracle of healing the sick, verified Christ’s credentials as the Son of God. Christ is the Great Physician, and He Himself spoke of the ultimate and eternal application of this title in His willingness and ability to heal the spiritual disease of sin and spiritual death in God’s chosen people (Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). Christ is able to cure every spiritual condition by His shed blood, imputed righteousness, and power to give life to the dead. These miracles also confirmed (established) His Word as being of God and not of men (Mark 16:20; John 3:2; 5:36; Acts 2:22; 10:38).

(Matt. 4:24) - The Lord’s fame began to spread throughout all Syria. People came to Him to find healing. Of the physical cures that He gave, we can see how they parallel spiritual healing the Lord works in His people for their salvation: (1) They were many - *“All sick people ... of all manner of sickness and disease”* both physical and mental. All whom the Lord reveals their sickness of sin come to Christ, and He heals them all of this spiritual disease. (2) They were miraculous. Those who were healed were in need of Divine power. Like the woman with the issue of blood, they were beyond being cured by men. Spiritual and eternal salvation is beyond the efforts of men. It is of the Lord totally and exclusively. (3) They were acts of mercy costing these sick people nothing. Like salvation of the soul, it was *“without money and without price”* (Isa. 55:1).

(Matt. 4:25) - The miracles resulted in multitudes flocking to Him. Those coming to Christ for physical healing were both Jew and Gentile. This is the way it is with eternal salvation. God has a people out of all nations, both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 2:11-22). All whom God saves by His grace are spiritual Jews and citizens of spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:26-29).