

Christ: The Light of the World

Matthew 4: 12-17

Our text today comes at the onset of Jesus' public ministry. The text records the prophecy of Isaiah, declaring those who sat in darkness would experience a great light. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, I was reminded of Christ being the Light of the world, coming to set us free from the darkness of sin.

While examining the text, we discover much about the scope of Jesus' ministry. As He began to walk among men, performing miracles and teaching the Word, He presented Himself as the Christ, the promised Messiah. As you read the accounts in the Gospels, you discover that the ministry of Christ led to Calvary, where He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Although it appears subtly, Calvary and His coming death are in view in this passage.

While this is not the usual Christmas text or message, it is very fitting for this time of year. Through it we get a glimpse of the beginnings of Jesus' ministry and the path He would take from this moment forward. As we examine the [facts](#) of the text, I want to consider: [Christ: The Light of the World](#).

I. The Diversity Jesus Faced (12-13) – Matthew reveals the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the diverse situation He encountered within society. Consider:

A. The Opposition (12a) – [Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee](#). Very early in His work among men, we discover the opposition and adversity Jesus faced. This refers to John's imprisonment, but this was a result of his preaching about the Lord and the strong message of repentance. John faced great opposition from the leading Jews and authorities within Jerusalem, and Jesus would as well. Their message was contrary to accepted beliefs and caused men to examine their hearts, convicting of sin.

- Little has changed in two thousand years in regard to Jesus and His message. The world continues to reject the message of repentance and salvation. They despise a message that convicts of sin and causes them to examine their hearts and eternal destination.

B. The Location (12b-13) – [he departed into Galilee](#).^[13] [And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim](#). Following the arrest and imprisonment of John, Jesus left Nazareth, the place of His childhood, and came to dwell in Capernaum, on the coast of Galilee. That may seem insignificant as well, but it was a move with

purpose. In fact, nothing Jesus did was insignificant. Every action he made had purpose. Now, some assume Jesus fled Nazareth because of the great opposition in and around Jerusalem. No doubt this would have created a measure of difficulty, but that was not the purpose for the move. This began Jesus' public ministry and He was committed to sharing the Gospel with as many as He could. This was a move to spread the message and reveal Himself to the masses.

- This ought to challenge the church today. Often we get content and complacent within our Nazareth, the area we are most familiar, and fail to fulfill the Great Commission of taking the Gospel to the world. We are called to be a witness to the Lord within our Jerusalem, our Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

C. The Determination (13) – *And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.* Matthew provides some geographic information about the area that would become the home base for Jesus' ministry. There is also some historic information that reveals the demographic of Capernaum. The descendants of Zebulon and Naphtali dwelt there. There is something to be said about knowing the particular demographics of an area for ministry, but there is a simpler principle here. Jesus desired to minister to people. All men needed a Savior and His focus was to reach the lost and perishing.

- It is easy to lose focus and neglect the basic fundamentals of ministry. The church is in the people business. We must not get so consumed with methods or preferences that we lose sight of our focus. We are called to share the Gospel with people. All are born in sin, separated from God, and stand in need of salvation through Christ. Reaching the world is our agenda!

II. The Prophecy Jesus Fulfilled (14-16) – Here Matthew discusses the Old Testament prophecy concerning Jesus' ministry. Consider:

A. The Promise (14-15) – *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*^[15] *The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.* Had there been any doubt in the minds of those who read these words, Matthew reminds them that Jesus ministering in Capernaum was no haphazard event or coincidence. This move was the fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah had prophesied some 750 years earlier that Jesus would minister in this area. In fact, Jesus' entire life and ministry were in accordance with prophecy. He came to accomplish the Father's will regarding the redemption of humanity. He was not operating alone, but according to the sovereign will of God. His first advent fulfilled every prophecy given in that regard, and His second coming will also be in accordance with the Word of God.

B. The Purpose (16) – *The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.* Isaiah's prophecy was given and fulfilled for a purpose. Matthew describes that here. Isaiah spoke of:

1. The Desperation (16a) – *The people which sat in darkness...* Although many in Capernaum were descendants of Zebulon and Naphtali, sons of Jacob, they sat in darkness. They were born in sin due to the fall of Adam. They were blinded by their sin, standing in need of a Savior. This darkness was not limited to Capernaum; the whole world sat in darkness spiritually.

- While we now live following the great sacrifice of Christ for the sin of the world, humanity remains in darkness. Like those in Capernaum, we too were born in sin, separated from God, and in need of a Savior. Christ came to provide the Light necessary to lift us from the darkness of sin.

2. The Illumination (16a) – *The people which sat in darkness saw great light.* While Capernaum and the world sat in darkness, spiritually blinded, Jesus came and revealed great Light. He came and presented Himself as the Christ, the Son of the living God who would die for the sin of the world. Their sin was confronted and the means of salvation and reconciliation was revealed. The Light of salvation had come to open the eyes of the blind.

- We, like them, were born in darkness. Our eyes were blinded to truth. We stood in need of spiritual healing in order to see. Through the direction and conviction of the Spirit, our eyes were opened to the Light of Christ. He was revealed to us as the Savior we desperately needed and the source of our salvation! Oh what a happy day when I was privileged to see the Light!

3. The Visitation (16b) – *and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.* While the world languished in darkness, God had a plan and provided the remedy. In the midst of sinful humanity, the Light of the world sprung up among them. Jesus knew the dire need of men. He did not look on from afar with a sympathetic eye; He emptied Himself of the glory He had in heaven, took on the form of a man, lived a sinless life among humanity, and died on the cross for our sin! The Son of God, Savior of the world, had come to dwell among men! *John 1:14 – And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* Phil.2:6-8 – *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ^[7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ^[8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

- The life and ministry of Jesus happened so long ago, but men continue to rejoice in His coming. Had He not come to earth, as the atoning sacrifice, we would yet be without hope, unsaved and condemned before God. I am thankful for His visitation to earth for all our sin and I am thankful for His personal visitation with me through the Holy Spirit! What a Savior!

III. The Necessity Jesus Revealed (17) – From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew reveals the urgency with which Jesus preached, seeking to reveal Himself as the Christ. All who heard must respond. Consider:

A. The Mandate (17) – From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent. As Jesus walked among men, He delivered a simple and profound mandate for all: Repent. All who lived and heard His words were born in sin, guilty before God. They must realize their need of a Savior and repent of their unbelief if salvation was to be made available. They could not continue to live in sin, following the lusts and desires of the old man, and expect to be acceptable to God.

- This is a message that is little preached in our day, and rejected by most who hear it. Humanity doesn't like to be confronted about their sin. The flesh desires to be fulfilled and has no desire to walk in a different way. Repentance is essential to salvation. We must come to the place in life where we realize that we are sinful and stand in need of salvation, a work we cannot obtain on our own. We must repent of the sin we have committed and desire to walk in a new direction with the Lord. Unless one recognizes his need and is willing to follow the Lord and dismiss the old way of life, he cannot be saved.

B. The Message (17) – From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This message of Jesus confused many because they were not sincere in seeking Him. Most viewed this statement as a promise to restore the kingdom, delivering Israel from the Romans. Jesus was not speaking of a physical kingdom. His words revealed the promised Messiah had come, literally standing in their midst. He was the One they must look to and believe in for salvation. The salvation of the Lord was nigh at hand for them. There was no need to look any further. God's plan of redemption was to be fulfilled as Christ died for the sin of the world and rose again in glorious victory!

- We know, according to God's Word, that Jesus will return in power and great glory to establish His kingdom here on earth, restoring Israel, but that is not the focus of His message. He reveals the need for righteousness for all mankind. In order to stand within the Kingdom of God, being accepted of the Father, one must be righteous. This is only achieved through faith in Christ. He reveals the means of salvation stood in their presence. They must look to Him for salvation.

- The same is true for us today. There is no need to look for another. Christ fully satisfied the righteous demands of God, providing for our salvation. He is the sole means of salvation. If you desire forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, and eternal life with the Lord, you must come through faith in Christ alone!

Conclusion: I am thankful for the Light of the world. I rejoice that He willingly came to bear our sin and provide for our salvation. I will never forget the day He came to me and tenderly called me to His side. Through faith in Him, I was saved and placed within the body of Christ.

Was there a moment in your life when the Lord visited you? If so, how did you respond? Maybe He has visited you today through the pleading of the Holy Spirit. He is calling in salvation for those who have yet to respond. Come to Him if He is calling you today!