

**11<sup>th</sup> January 2017.**

## **THE PRIORITY OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.**

**Matthew 4:12 -25.**

Tonight we continue Matthew's account of the life of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, however it should be noted that Matthew wrote his gospel topically rather than chronologically (*following the sequence of events in order of time*), Which applies to the text we are considering today.

Reading verses 12 – 16.....

Remembrance is brought, to us of John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner as aforementioned in chapter 3. And Matthew has it that it was after Christ's temptation victory that after John the Baptist was jailed by Herod Antipas for his bold rebuke against his illicit marriage, that Jesus launched His public ministry.

A good consultation of the harmony of the gospels shows that John was not imprisoned immediately after Christ's temptations encounter, and that he had earlier on ministered in Galilee, even performing there His first public miracle at a wedding.

But the topic we have is that when John was removed from the scene, it was then that Jesus took center stage in the regions of Galilee, which were predominantly gentile populated areas considered backward, and despicable.

Luke, in chapter 4 tells of Jesus' rejection by His own , after He'd read them the fulfillment of the Word of God in verses 18-21, His fellow Nazarenes instead sought to kill Him outside the city, by throwing Him off the cliff.

So Matthew has us in the know that Jesus' main area of operation wasn't in Jerusalem, nor in Nazareth, but in Galilee of the Gentiles, which was prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 9:1,2 [read], Also see Is.42:6,7..... Which is what was Jesus' mandate as we had noted from Luke 4:18,19....[read]

Which Matthew summarizes as the content of His message/ proclamation...vs 17...

Now, a look back at chapter 3:1,2 shows that was the same main content of John the Baptist's ministry. Which now being carried on by Jesus Christ, proves that since John had been considered a prophet of God, even so Jesus has the same message from the same God, who requires all men to repent.... For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Luke 24:47 has it that in His closing charge to His disciples, Jesus commanded them to preach repentance as well.

In Acts 2:38,39, on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the same message,.... at the time because the Holy Spirit had come, was the kingdom of heaven no longer at hand but here....(Rom. 14:17.... “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”).

So there we have it; the main content of Jesus’ message as of the Lord God has and should always be that of repentance from sin, unto living a life that proves repentance, and seeks God’s purpose for one’s life as a means of attaining the kingdom of Heaven’s rule over them.

[The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are one and the same, just referred to differently, because of the reverence the Jews had unto the Lord’s name.)

Verses 18 -22, read..... Showing the importance Jesus had in the effectiveness of discipleship. When Christ began to preach, he began to gather disciples, who should now be the hearers, and hereafter the preachers, of his doctrine, who should now be witnesses of his miracles, and hereafter concerning them witness of His divinity.

Jesus had encountered Peter and Andrew before, near Bethabara, in the Jordan region, where they were following John the Baptist (John 1:35-42), but here, He was giving them an effectual calling and an ordination. In all his preaching he gave a common call to all the country, but in this he gave a special and particular call to those that were given him by the Father, and an appointment for the work of the ministry.

Notable, is the place from where he called them.... The Sea of Galilee, in the country.

Then that they were fishermen, implying that they were not wealthy men,(I Cor.1:26-31), they weren’t learned men, they were hardworking men, They were men that were accustomed to hardships and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in perils by waters. Note, those who have learned to bear hardships, and run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness. God always calls men that are at work, as its proof of their responsibility.

**The nature of their call;** (What the call was (v. 19)); *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* They had followed Christ before, as ordinary disciples (John 1:37), but so they might follow Christ, and follow their calling too; therefore they were called to a more close and constant attendance, and must leave their earthly calling. Note, Even they who had been called to follow Christ, have need to be called to follow on, and to follow nearer, especially when they are designed for the work of the ministry. The Lord utilizes one's calling in life for an effectual calling in service of His kingdom, like He called David the shepherd boy to Shepherd his people Israel...., He can call the cleaner to clean up people's souls, or even the caterer to feed their souls....

**What was the success of this call;** Peter and Andrew *straightway left their nets* (v. 20); and James and John *immediately left the ship and their father* (v. 22); *and they all followed him.* Note, Those who would follow Christ aright, must *leave all* to follow him. Every Christian must leave all in affection, set loose to all, must *hate father and mother* (Luke 14:26), must love them less than Christ, must be ready to part with his interest in them rather than with his interest in Jesus Christ; but those who are devoted to the work of the ministry are, in a special manner, concerned to disentangle themselves from all the affairs of this life, that they may give themselves wholly to that work which requires the whole man.

Finally, we see His mode of operations and the scope of Jesus' ministry as in verses 23 –25...

He taught and preached...the gospel of the kingdom of God. Not of the ways of man, nor of the kingdom of darkness, but he emphasized the kingdom of God.

The difference between teaching and preaching is one of emphasis and one of manner, not a difference of content, but a difference of presentation.

This is an example to ministers, to lay themselves out to do good, and to be instant, and constant, in season, and out of season, to preach the word. What a powerful physician Christ was; he went about not only teaching, but healing, and both with his word, that he might magnify that above all his name, "He sent his word, and healed them." He showed by His power to heal all the various illnesses that he was the answer to man's crises, of the spirit, soul and body, sufficiently dealing with issues from the core, which was sin, the cause of corruption and death in all life.

His fame spread out and great multitudes followed Him from over the about 240 cities where he went about doing good by grace and mercy with love unto all.

Again we here have a lot to learn from Jesus Christ, that as followers of His, the priority of our lives' ministry should have the same pattern of the theme of our message of proclamation by teaching and preaching, being repentance from sin, focused upon the kingdom of God.

Appreciating the essence of discipleship because that was how He did His training and commissioned His followers to do likewise. (Matt.28:18-20).

And also having in mind the potential of scope and effectiveness like He had if we follow Him wholeheartedly and faithfully.

Jesus' ministry was simple, yet so extensive and powerful.

He was so famous, yet so personal.