# Bible Study Matthew 4:12-25

After the temptation in the wilderness that no one else was witness to, Jesus returns to begin his ministry and it becomes very public, very quickly!

**Read Matthew 4:12-25**

1. John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus’ ministry. His arrest seems to be the catalyst for Jesus to begin his public work. A hint as to why that might be is in the word Matthew uses to explain John’s arrest. NIV “put in prison” translates a word meaning “handed over” and it’s a word Matthew uses often (sometimes translated “betrayed”. eg **read \*10:4, 26:15, 27:3; \*17:22, 20:18, 26:21; \* 27:2, 18, 26.** What does the repetition of this word suggest?

*That John is Jesus’ forerunner in many ways. He comes before Jesus. He proclaims the same message before Jesus. He is handed over as Jesus will be. And soon we’ll discover that he is executed for his ministry, as Jesus will be. NB there were more examples than these!*

1. In 2:23 Joseph took his family and “went and lived” ie “settled” in Nazareth. Now, the adult Jesus “went and lived” in Capernaum beside Lake Galilee. **Read Isaiah 9:1-7**. What is the significance of this area?

*It’s where God promised the ones in the darkness of judgment would one day have hope – because of one who would be born who would be described in terms only fitting for God himself.*

1. The land of Zebulun and of Naphtali were part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As Isaiah wrote his prophecy, that northern kingdom was falling under the judgement of God. **Read 2 Kings 17:7-24** and look for ways this context helps to shed more light on Matthew 4:12-25.

*The people of those two tribes had long been judged by God for their rebellion. They had been called by the prophets to repent, as John (and now Jesus) called people to repent. Those two tribes ceased to exists after 722BC, described in 2 Kings. But Isaiah’s prophecy still stood. The new call to repent in that same location would have sounded a new note of hope for any with ears to hear. God was keeping his promise. Where only darkness and judgement belonged, there is now the offer of salvation.*

1. In Jesus’ day, rabbis often had followers, but these were people who came to them and asked to follow. Jesus’ disciples are different. **Read 1 Kings 19:15-21**. What similarities with Matthew 4 do you see?

*Jesus is more like a prophet who commands people to come after him. They in turn leave behind their former work / way of life to become his disciple. The role Jesus gives to his 12 apostles will be more like a prophet than a travelling teacher / rabbi; that is, announcing a message from God and calling on people to respond to it.*

1. John and Jesus preached the same message (3:2, 4:17). But John baptised people with water whereas Jesus healed diseases and cast out demons. What does this suggest is the difference between their apparently identical messages?

*With John, the kingdom was near because the king was near, coming soon after him. With Jesus, the nearness of the kingdom mean it was present – the king had arrived and he was exercising the authority only God’s king could have.*

NB v.17 is a summary of what Jesus taught, just as v.23 “the good news of the kingdom” is also a summary. We will need to keep reading Matthew’s Gospel to find out the content of this message. It’s handy to have a shorthand way of referring to what we believe (eg “the gospel”, or “the good news of the kingdom”), but it is essential to be able to explain this in more detail for our own sake as well as anyone we have the opportunity to talk to about Jesus.

1. Some people have said that Jesus healed people to help draw a crowd and show the power of his message. Is that the impression Matthew gives us as to why Jesus heals people?

*We’re not told directly, but it seems to be an expression of what he’s come to do – just as he resisted the devil, he here overturns the effects of the fall. Ps 2, the Psalm where God declares “you are my son”, ends with the appeal to ‘take refuge’ in the son, refuge from the righteous judgement of God on rebels. This is the Son showing where we can take refuge from the curse of Gen 3. vv24-25 actually sound like the compassionate healings that Jesus performed are almost a distraction for some, who come only for healing and not to hear or to respond to the message he proclaimed.*

1. How do you respond to the fact that Jesus’ first disciples (3 of whom became his closest friends) were ordinary fishermen? Perhaps **read 1 Cor 1:26-31.**

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