

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY NINE

Where and How It All Began

Matthew 4:12–25

We are on the pages of Matthew's gospel. Jesus comes into our lives as into the lives of the disciples and reaches us with His message. He issues "our calling," and we're drawn to Him and cannot say no.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the days leading up to the Olympics, runners relay a flame lit on Mount Olympus, Greece, to the site of the opening ceremony. Holding the torch high, the last athlete in the relay runs into the stadium and lights a giant cauldron, signaling the beginning of the games. The torch relay symbolically links the past with the present and unites all nations around the Olympic spirit of goodwill.

In a similar sense, the prophets of the Old Testament have relayed through the nations a flame of salvation lit in the heavenlies. From prophet to prophet and year after year, the torchbearers passed the flame until John the Baptizer appeared as the final link from the past to the present. When John announced, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29), he lit a great beacon of hope and signaled the start of Christ's work of redemption.

In this study, we'll witness a momentous transition when John's ministry comes to a close after his arrest and Jesus launches His ministry in Galilee. With these events, the countdown of history reaches its zero hour. The moment to which all the prophets looked forward in wide-eyed anticipation has begun as the Light of the world blazes for all to see.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

One of Jesus' first actions was to call certain individuals to follow Him. Prepare your heart to hear His calling through your study as you open in prayer.

Father, I place myself before You as I read Your Word. Count me among the first disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John, who heard Jesus' call and followed. Speak clearly through the Scriptures today that I may respond with understanding and a willingness to obey, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read *Matthew 4:12–25*, notice three sections. First, Matthew explains when and where Jesus ministered and the prophetic significance of that place (*Matthew 4:12–16*). Second, we learn the central message Jesus preached (*4:17*). And third, we see the response to Jesus' threefold ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing (*4:18–25*).



Observation: When, Where, What, and Who of Jesus' Ministry

Searching the Scriptures starts with observing the text closely to pick up all the important details the author intended us to know.¹ Let's begin with when and where Jesus began His ministry.

When and Where Jesus Ministered—Matthew 4:12–16

When Jesus learned about John's arrest and imprisonment, Jesus "left Judea and returned to Galilee" (*Matthew 4:12*). Matthew explained why John was arrested in *14:1–5*; what was the reason?



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John's imprisonment meant that his job as the "voice shouting in the wilderness" and clearing the road for Jesus was done (Matthew 3:3). It was time for Jesus to step onto the road John prepared and start His messianic journey. Where did Jesus go, according to 4:13?



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

Bible maps are a vital tool in the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study. Find the locations on the maps in the back of your Bible. You can also locate the cities and regions by going to the maps titled "*Ministry of Jesus*" and "*Twelve Tribes of Israel*" on the Insight for Living Ministries website. Take a few minutes to follow Jesus' route and acquaint yourself with the area in which so many of the events of Jesus' ministry occurred. For background information on Capernaum, read page 74 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*. In the following space, you can write down notes on what you discover.



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As you read about the prophetic significance of this region in *Matthew 4:14–16*, note the focus on ministry to the Gentiles and the emphasis on light shining in the darkness. Why do you think God chose this region—an international crossroads—as the lampstand on which to set the light of His Son?

Don't think that those who live in darkness enjoy the darkness. In their hearts is an emptiness and a frustration that they can never please the gods they worship. When Jesus preached repentance, many responded, "I've been waiting all my life to have peace and the assurance of eternal life, to know that the One I'm worshiping has accepted me by grace into His family." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What Jesus Preached—Matthew 4:17

Matthew used the phrase, “From then on,” to mark the official beginning point of Jesus’ public ministry (Matthew 4:17).² What message did Jesus preach, according to 4:17?

Like John, Jesus called people to repent—to change their thinking about God and go a new direction. To repent is to *turn from* living our own way and *turn to* living God’s way. Why repent? Because “the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (4:17). The kingdom would bring righteousness, justice, and peace, but also judgment—which was the reason both John and Jesus called for people to repent.



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Although John and Jesus proclaimed the same message, what do you think made Jesus' preaching as the King of the kingdom more appealing (*John 4:22–36*)?

How People Responded to Jesus' Ministry—Matthew 4:18–25

Look for the phrase “followed him” in *Matthew 4:18–25*. Write down who followed Jesus, where they were from, and the reasons they followed.

Jesus focused His ministry on three functions, according to Matthew's list in *4:23*. List them below.

When Jesus said, “Follow Me,” He didn't offer a pension plan. There was no insurance package. The disciples weren't hired to follow Jesus; they were called. No one is hired into the family of God; we're called to serve Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Preaching, Teaching, and Healing

Matthew paints a picture of Jesus' ministry with three broad brushstrokes: *preaching*, *teaching*, and *healing*. To discover the meaning and significance of these facets of Jesus' ministry, read page 79 of *Insights on Matthew 1–15*. For an online resource, consult the *IVP New Testament Commentary Series* at biblegateway.com and read the section under the heading, "*Jesus Demonstrates God's Reign with Power (4:23–25)*." Write down what you find about the differences between preaching and teaching and the reasons Jesus engaged in a healing ministry.

Jesus' light shone brightly wherever He went "in the land where death casts its shadow" (Matthew 4:16). Drawn to His light, Jesus' disciples gave up everything to follow Him. Let's look closer at John's account of how the disciples were called to follow Jesus and fill in a few gaps in Matthew's gospel.



Correlation: Jesus' Call of the Disciples

According to John 1:35–42, Andrew and another disciple (probably John the apostle) were disciples of John the Baptizer when they saw Jesus for the first time at the Jordan River. What happened that day, and how did Andrew introduce Simon to Jesus?



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John fills in other details about Jesus' first disciples.

- Jesus called Philip, who brought Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:43–50).
- Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana, and “his disciples believed in him” (2:11).
- In Jerusalem, His disciples watched Jesus clear the money changers from the temple (2:13–22).
- Jesus with His disciples baptized people in the Judean wilderness, and people were leaving John to come to Jesus (3:22–36).
- Jesus left for Galilee through Samaria, where He met the woman at the well (4:1–42).

Around this time, John the Baptizer was arrested, and that's when Matthew picks up the action, with Jesus leaving Judea for Galilee. Apparently, Simon, Andrew, James, and John had returned to fishing. Seeing them in their boats, Jesus issued His call to full-time ministry: “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” (Matthew 4:19).

So, it took a while for the disciples to get to the point of following Jesus as a vocation. What principles can you glean regarding how Jesus calls us and the growth process involved in deciding to follow Him.

In Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, read pages 77–78 about how God worked in Pastor Chuck's life over time to call him into vocational ministry. What can you learn from his example?



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I didn't have any idea what I was getting into or the direction we would be going, but I was called—like Peter, Andrew, James, and John. I look back, and I just shake my head thinking how gracious God was. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Responding to the Light of Christ

He still calls people to follow Him today. His calling may involve vocational ministry like the calling of the disciples. He may call those who are “weary and carry heavy burdens” (Matthew 11:28) to find healing and restoration in Jesus. Another group, the “large crowds,” may follow Jesus from a distance out of curiosity (4:25). He calls all of us in whatever place He finds us.

Have you felt drawn to Jesus' light and sensed His call? What draws you to Jesus? How have you answered His call?

Do you sometimes feel resistant to Christ's call? If so, what might be holding you back?



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What does it look like to answer Christ's call today? What might He be calling you to do that's new or different than what've you've done before?

The events in Matthew 4 marked a point of transition. Jesus' years of quiet obscurity in small-town Nazareth and the Judean wilderness were over, and a new season of public ministry had begun. The wheels that would carry Jesus to the cross were set in motion and there was no turning back. That's how it is to follow Jesus; once we set out, there's no turning back. But we're so glad we did.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, free me from fear and take away that longing for earthly security that really is not secure at all. Drive far from me any interest in leaning on my own understanding. Bring me face to face with Your Son and the joy of serving Him and following Him wherever He may lead, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. In 16:21, Matthew used the same phrase, "From then on," to mark a shift to *private* ministry, as Jesus focused on preparing His disciples for His death and resurrection in Jerusalem.

