

## Jesus Called His First Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to have victory over Satan. We see that sharing Scripture and praying are the weapons that will defeat him. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus called His first disciples.

In Matthew 4:12-17, we read, “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’ From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” This statement makes it clear that the things in at least the first four chapters of John had already happened, because John was still baptizing in John 4:1-3, where it says, “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.”

We see that Jesus went back to His hometown of Nazareth for a period of time. Then, He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum. This was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, James, John and Matthew. At least the first four had already known Jesus for several months. John 1:35-42 records the first time that Jesus met these men. Then, John 2:12 says, “After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.” These and possibly a few others were probably the disciples who had gone with Jesus to the wedding in Cana. Here, we see that Jesus had earlier also spent some time in Capernaum before He and a group of the disciples went to Jerusalem for the Passover.

We see that this move, by Jesus, to Capernaum was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2 which says, “Nevertheless the gloom *will* not *be* upon her who *is* distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, *by* the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” Here, we see that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that said that this area of Galilee was in spiritual darkness and that Jesus came to bring light to this area. Jesus also began to preach publicly and His message was the same as the message of John the Baptist. John said, in Matthew 3:2, and Jesus said, in Matthew 4:17, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Jesus also taught His disciples the importance of preaching repentance. Mark 6:12 says, “So they went out and preached that *people* should repent.”

We read what Jesus did one day as He was walking by the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 4:18-22 says, “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.” Jesus had invited these men to come and get acquainted with Him nearly a year earlier when two of these men asked Jesus where He was staying. Jesus said in John 1:39, “He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where He was staying, and

remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).” That earlier call was a call to get acquainted. This was a call to learn how to serve.

We see how these four men responded to that call to learn how to serve. Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Him. Then, we see that James and John immediately left the boat and their father and followed Him. During the previous year, these men had been with Jesus to a variety of places and had seen what He taught and what He did. John 2:11 says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” When Jesus cleansed the temple, John 2:17 says, “Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’” John 3:22 says, “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.” They later returned from Judea with Jesus and passed through Samaria where Jesus met the woman at the well near the city of Sychar.

Jesus used that opportunity to begin to expand the vision of these men. The men went into the city and came back with food. When they returned, the woman was talking to Jesus. She then left and went back into the city. While she was gone, the disciples asked Jesus to eat. Jesus said that He had food which they did not know about. John 4:33-35 says, “Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, “There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.’” Then, John 4:38 adds, “I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” The disciples went into the city and all they found was food. The woman went into the city and returned with many people who believed. When the people heard Jesus, John 4:41 says, “And many more believed because of His own word.” The disciples did not know how to fish for men.

We see that these four men were all fishermen. As a result Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Here, we see that they were given an invitation that fit their background. They knew how to fish for fish. Now, Jesus gave them an invitation to follow Him. He promised them that He would show them how to fish for men. We see that Jesus was going to teach His disciples by His example. Jesus knew that the best way to teach people how to share the Gospel was by example. Mark 1:35-39 tells what happened the next morning. Those verses say, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’ But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Jesus was showing them how to fish for men.

Matthew 4:23-25 tells us more about what Jesus did. Those verses say, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.” Here, we see the things that Jesus did as He taught them how to fish for men.

First, Jesus was teaching in their synagogues. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., the Jews decided that if they were going to survive as a people, it would only happen if they got together and studied the Old Testament. As a result, they decided that any village that had ten Jewish men had to build a synagogue where

the Jews could gather daily for prayer and teach both the adults and the children to read the Old Testament. The synagogues also became the place where they worshiped on the Sabbath. As a result, these were the gathering places where Jews met together throughout the week wherever they lived. On the Sabbath, seven to nine men and teenage boys would each read a passage from the Old Testament and then someone would usually teach. The Gospels and the book of Acts show that Jesus and His followers were often given the opportunity as visitors to teach in the synagogues. Throughout Galilee, there were many towns and villages with one or more synagogues. They were just one room, but they had benches around the walls and the rest of the people would stand or sit on the floor.

Second, Jesus preached the Gospel of the kingdom wherever He and the disciples went. The disciples listened as Jesus taught and preached in many synagogues and learned what to share. They learned how to explain the Gospel of the kingdom. They heard the questions that were asked and saw how Jesus answered those questions. Then, Jesus would often give more explanation to the disciples when He and the disciples were alone. Mark 4:10-11 says, “But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables.’” In this way, the disciples were being taught to fish for men.

Third, Jesus verified His message and showed that He came from God by “healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Word quickly spread throughout the entire surrounding area of Syria, Judea, Galilee and other nearby regions. They started to bring all kinds of people who were sick, diseased, suffering from various torments or demon-possessed to be healed by Jesus. As a result, great crowds of people began to follow Jesus. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how Jesus showed His disciples to become fishers of men so that they can show others how to share the Gospel in the same way. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to equip others to share the Gospel.