



## Place of Jesus Ministry

**Matthew 4:12-17**, *Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: <sup>15</sup> "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: <sup>16</sup> 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." <sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

The people of Israel primarily had prayed, hoped, wished, and anticipated the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah who will be the righteous King, the One who would rule, the One who would bring light into darkness. This was the great cry of the hearts of the people of Israel.

This has been expressed repeatedly throughout the Old Testament.

**Isaiah 50:10**, *"Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord And rely upon his God."*

When you get to the place where you see only darkness, don't give up. Stay trusting the Lord your God, and He's the one who will bring the light.

**Isaiah 60:1-3**, *Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. <sup>2</sup> For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. <sup>3</sup> The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.*

The heart of the prophet that there is darkness in the world, but that God can be trusted for the anticipated revelation of light.

**Luke 2:25-32**, *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, <sup>28</sup> he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Your salvation <sup>31</sup> Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."*

Now Simeon, a Jew, was anticipating the light that was going to break upon the darkness that had existed in Israel and the world for centuries. The dawn was coming and he knew because God had confirmed to him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the breaking of that light, the dawning of the reality of the Messiah. So, the Old Testament in its darkness anticipated the light of the Messiah and the great kingdom of light, His eternal kingdom.

That becomes the theme of Matthew chapter 4, the first few verses.

Matthew presents Jesus as the King.

- ✓ King's ancestry,
- ✓ King's arrival,
- ✓ King's adoration,
- ✓ King's anticipation,
- ✓ King's announcer,
- ✓ King's affirmation,
- ✓ King's advantage, and
- ✓ King's activity.

Last week we saw the time gap between V11 and 12 is about one year. Events took place during that one year is been recorded in John Chapter 1 to John chapter 4:42.

Last week we saw the perfect timing of the ministry of Jesus.  
This week we will look at the right place.

**Mark 1:14-15**, *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Christians to function on God's timetable, to be patient, to wait upon the Lord, to function in a manner consistent with His will and His plan. Jesus began at exactly the right point because that was when God had set it up.

The very city, the very area, the very location was all a matter of divine decree.

- It was not a circumstance brought about by Herod's imprisonment of John.
- It was not a circumstance brought about by Jesus being afraid of the Pharisees.
- It was not by any mob at Nazareth that this was dictated, but rather by God.

Jesus didn't run out of fear from Herod because Herod was in fact the ruler of Galilee. This was predicted by the prophet that He would begin His ministry there.

It was the prophet Isaiah who said centuries before that that was the plan of God that determined that.

**V 12**, *Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.*

## Galilee:

“Galilee” comes from a Hebrew word, *galil*, which means “a circle,” and Galilee means is a circle. It is an area that circles the sea known as the Sea of Galilee.

It is also called the Lake of Kinnereth and also Lake Tiberius.

It is a country that circles that sea, bordered on the east plateau that now is known as the East Bank, bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the north by the mountains of southern Lebanon, on the south by Judea, the southern part.

There that circle surrounds the Sea of Galilee.

It's stretched from the **Lithiney River** in the north to the Plain of Esdraelon, and even below.



On the west, all the way through the coastal plain to the sea, the Mediterranean Sea.

On the east, it was bounded by the cliffs, that in that day were possessed by the nation Syria today Arab territory.

Basically Galilee is about 50 miles from north to south and about 25 miles from east to west - 25 miles wide, 50 miles long. An area surrounding the Sea of Galilee.

Now it was a very densely populated area.

It is the most fertile region of Palestine, from the southern part of Palestine down around the city today known as Tel Aviv; down in the south, anciently known as Joppa.

The southern part all the way north into Galilee. The city of Haifa being the major city of the north and that whole coastal plain is called anciently the Valley of Sharon.

When you hear about the rose of Sharon, and that speaks volumes to anybody who understands geography because that valley is intensely fertile. It is bordered all the way along by the Carmel Mountain range.

So Carmel is a group of mountains, not one mountain, but a group that runs up the coast. Between the Carmel range and the sea is the valley of Sharon, incredibly fertile.

The area between the Carmel range and the Sea of Galilee was another fertile area. This was the most productive land in all of the nation of Israel.

It is throughout rich in soil and pasture, producing every variety of tree, and inviting by its productivity even those who have the least inclination for agriculture.

Even people without a green thumb can make anything grow in Galilee.

Because of its fertility, had an enormous population. Josephus tells us that there were 204 villages in Galilee at that time. An area 25 miles wide and 50 miles long, had 204 villages in there is pretty packed.

In fact, none of the villages, according to Josephus, had fewer than 15,000 people, which would make the total population of Galilee about three million sixty thousand. It's amazing that they had that many people there and still had enough room left to grow the things.

Now Jesus when He began His ministry in Galilee did not begin His ministry out in the wilderness where nobody was but the place was literally packed with people.

They were non-traditionalists. Jesus knew that that would be a good place to gather followers who wouldn't be afraid to fight the old tradition.

**V 15, *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:***

Now that was the name of mockery because Galilee, though it was territorially Israel, had long ago begun to kind of mix together with the Gentiles.

To a Jew that's a very despicable thing to do, so they looked down upon Galilee because of the mixture of people that lived there. Galilee was surrounded by foreign people.

Along the coast was that great people who sailed the Mediterranean Sea known as the Phoenicians.

On the northern part were Syrians.  
On the southern part were Samaritans.  
On the west they had the Phoenicians.

There was a tremendous non-Jewish influence so they were very less on the traditionalism, and they were open to something new, and Jesus knew that. He selected that area.

Additionally, the roads of the world, the great roads of the world running from the east to the west and the north to the south, passed immediately through Galilee.

There was a very famous road in those days known as the Way of the Sea. The Way of the Sea led from Damascus through Galilee and then made a left turn and went right down to Africa.

Things coming from the eastern part of the world would come to Damascus. They had to be taken west to Galilee and then straight down into Africa. The road to the east went through Galilee and right on out to the furthest frontiers of the east, so it was a trade route.

Because of that there was a tremendous mingling. Jerusalem never had that. Because of Jerusalem's location it was isolated. It was on a high, high plateau. People didn't bother to go up there. It was in a desolate desert area to the east and a coastline to the west - desert to the south, and so Jerusalem never had that trade element as did Galilee. The traffic of the world passed through there.

Galilee's geographical position had affected its history dramatically. Originally Galilee was assigned when God gave Israel the land. They divided it up into twelve tribes.

The Galilean section was given to Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun. Joshua chapter 19.  
It was Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun.

So it was the original territory of these tribes. But these tribes made a terrible mistake. When God sent all the tribes into Israel, after the wanderings, and God got them all organized. He told them to do one thing to wipe out all the Canaanites.

Zebulun and Naphtali didn't do that. So from the very start, because they didn't expel the Canaanites, they began with a mixed population.

800 years before Christ, the Assyrians engulfed the whole land and took the people into exile. Strangers settled in Galilee.

164 B.C, Simon Maccabees chased the Syrians back to their own territory and took back a remnant of Galilee.

104 B.C. a man named Aristobulus reconquered Galilee totally for the Jewish nation. He forcibly circumcised its inhabitants. He was going to make it Jewish no matter what.

In the 8th century to 164, that was a place inhabited by strangers.

In 164 there was a remnant.

In 104 it was conquered again for the Jewish nation and repopulated by Jews.

But the influence through those centuries of Gentiles had tended to diminish the strong Jewish traditionalism of that part of the land of Israel.

So it was a place of variety, open to new ideas and new influences. Jesus was to begin in fertile soil where He knew He could gain a hearing before He went to Jerusalem where they slammed the door in His face and nailed Him to a cross.

**V 13**, *And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,*

The reason He left Nazareth was because they chased Him out from there. The mob tried to kill Him, and He had to flee for His life.

*"He came and dwelt in Capernaum."*

Jesus lived up until He was 30 in Nazareth. When He finally announced to them in the synagogue who He was.

**Luke 4:21**, *And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

They were furious. They took Him out to the brow of the hill. They were going to throw Him off the hill. They didn't want Him. The prophet was without honour in His own city, and so he settled in Capernaum.

Capernaum word means "the village of Nahum,"

Some say it was named after the prophet Nahum. We don't know. If you translate the word Nahum it means "compassion." It could just be a title – "the village of compassion."

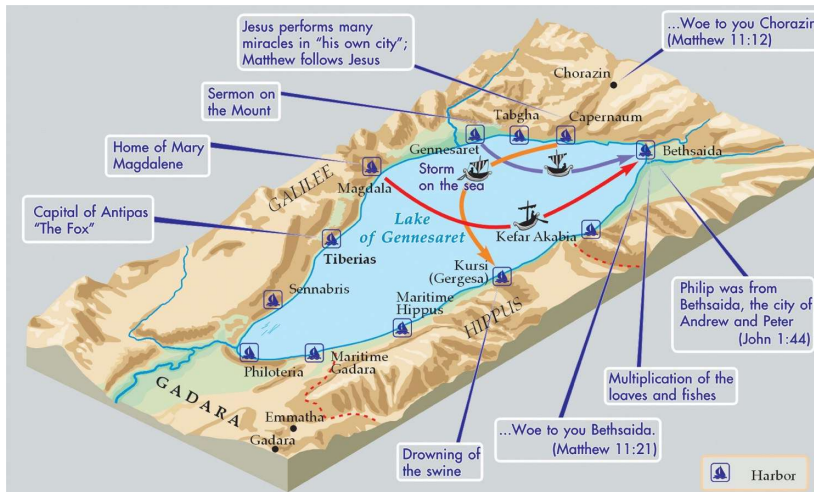
It's a famous little town. In the time of Jesus it was a flourishing city. Matthew himself had his tax office there.

**Matthew 9:9**, *As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

It was there that Jesus called his disciples. John 1. Jesus called His disciples, the first group that He ever called, He called in Capernaum.

Again in Capernaum, here in the fourth chapter, as we note His meeting with His disciples again. It was in Capernaum that Jesus did miracle after miracle.

There are at least eight different miracles in the book of Matthew that occurred in Capernaum.



Now the location was strategic. It was right at the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee, a vital place.

**V 13** *“in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali,”*

In the tribal territory which once was assigned to Zebulon and Naphtali. It's called Galilee at the end of verse 13, or end of verse 15, “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

It was really Galilee of the Jews until all those influences had come in.

The sad thing about Capernaum is further on in Matthew.

**Matthew 11:23-24**, *And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”*

Capernaum was exalted unto heaven because that was Jesus' city. Any city that could be the city of Jesus would be the recipient of the most exalted person that ever walked the earth.

They were exalted to the heavens but would be brought down to hades.

That tremendous city situated on one of the most beautiful locations of any city, nestled at the foot of those beautiful hills, right on the coast.

Jesus chose Galilee.

The whole idea must have been just offensive to Jerusalem Jews. The Messiah would settle in Capernaum of Galilee?

There are no theologians there.

That is a place where people are farmers and fishermen.

The outstanding Jewish minds were in Jerusalem.

The revelation of God was to be in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was the sacred city and the only fitting place for the Messiah.

A Galilean messiah was ludicrous.

**John 7:40-41**, *Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup> Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?"*

**John 1:46**, *And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

**John 7:52**, *" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet <sup>1</sup> has arisen out of Galilee."*

But out of Galilee did arise the greatest prophet. They thought they knew their Scripture well.

Did they forget the prophecy of Isaiah?

Ahaz was the king, and he was rotten. Ahaz had introduced idolatry into Israel. The worship of Molech. Molech was the savage god of the Ammonites, and the Molech worshipers used to put babies in fires.

The worship of Molech had been introduced and established, on the Mount of Olives, by Ahaz. A brazen statue of Molech was erected, and at the feet of Molech this brazen statue was a fire into which the babies were thrown on the Mount of Olives.

Ahaz had even shut the temple doors and left the whole thing to rot and decay. Now this is Isaiah's time. If there was ever a dark time in the history of Israel it was then.

**Isaiah 8:19-22**, *And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. <sup>21</sup> They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. <sup>22</sup> Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.*

The area is dark. The people of God have been darkened. The nation is dark.  
In the midst of their evil they are driven in the darkness, a pathetic picture.

**Isaiah 9:1**, *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.*

A little before Isaiah made this prophecy the inhabitants of this area, Galilee, were carried away by a man known as Tiglath-Pileser, who was the king of Assyria.

We can read about it in 2 Kings 15. He came in and took them all out, just hauled them away. The land was desolate and waste.

At first it was a light affliction and afterward a more grievous affliction. But it won't always be this way the light will come, and it will come to the land most brutalized.

**Isaiah 9:2**, *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.*

The southern kingdom, when it was taken into captivity, returned. The northern kingdom never did.

Their vexation, darkness and their judgment was greater than that of the south. The Lord in His wonderful mercy and grace says that the part of the nation that knew the greatest judgment is the part of the nation that will know the greatest salvation.

The most punished will be the most blessed.

The most hated will be the most beloved.

The light will dawn in Galilee, not just Galilee, but Galilee of the Gentiles.

**Galilee:**

Conquered by the Gentiles,

Led captive by the Gentiles,

Repopulated by the Gentiles,

Dominated by Gentile influence and

They will be the ones who see the dawn of the Messiah.

This is a great Old Testament indication that God always intended to redeem the world, not just the Jew. God will show that His salvation is for everyone apart from ritual, religion, tradition, temples, and religious sacrifices systems.

**Isaiah 9:3**, *You have multiplied the nation And increased its joy; They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

God looks in the future, does Isaiah. There is a day coming when that nation that has been so dark, that northern part so dim, is going to be lit with the light of the dawn of Messiah. They are going to enter into the golden age.

V 3 is a millennial promise.

They will have multiplied joy. They will rejoice according to the joy in the harvest and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. There will be a great day of rejoicing.

**Isaiah 9:4**, *For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian.*

Just like Gideon conquered the Midianites, God is going to come in and conquer the enemies of that area of Galilee. God is going to set them free, turn on the lights, and give them liberty.

**Isaiah 9:5**, *For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire.*

God is going to come in and burn up all the enemies. Clean it out, and bring the golden age to Galilee. Messiah will come to Galilee.

Now remember, the Old Testament doesn't see the gap in the church age. Here Isaiah looks and he sees the Messiah coming to Galilee and bringing the golden age. It was only when the Jews rejected Jesus Christ that the golden age was separated from the first coming of the Messiah.

### **Who is this light?**

Isaiah just keeps talking about a light, but he does not say who the light is. He just keeps saying it's going to be a golden age and the broken yoke and freedom and liberty and victory and the light will dawn.

**Isaiah 9:6-7**, *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

In His sovereign grace God will do the unexpected.

Not only to the Jewish, but to the downcast, to the mocked, to the afflicted, to the despised, to the ignorant, to the non-ritualistic, to the mixed multitude of Galilee, to them did He send His Son.

To those in the greatest darkness He sent the greatest light.

That is the grace of our God!

In and around Galilee that Jesus spent most all of His life.  
He grew up there,  
He travelled from village to village there,  
He called His disciples there,  
He saved people there,  
He healed people there!

Galilee of the Gentiles!

A new day was dawning in the world when the light broke in Galilee. For centuries the land sitting in darkness.

**V 16,** *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."*

Jesus came to dispel the darkness, to dispel the death with words and deeds of love and mercy.

### **Application:**

#### **Where Jesus went?**

He went to the neediest people.

The ministry of Christ around the world, that's where the cry is to go to the neediest people and the most receptive people.

The first Gentile that God ever sent a messenger to with the gospel was a Gentile whose heart searched longingly to know God was Cornelius.

We need to go to the people who most wait to hear.

The neediest people who are the most receptive. Those who travelled with me to the Latvian and Russian Churches knew that very well.

So, the King began His ministry, at the right point, in the right place.

#### **Right Message.**

**V 17,** *'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*

Nobody ever needed to discuss what Jesus' message was.

He opened His mouth, there never was any doubt, and when the light broke and the light dawned.

John the Baptist started his ministry with the exact words in **Matthew 3:2**.

The first thing is to repent.

The second thing is the reason to repent.

When the light dawned and Jesus came and men awoke from the stupor of darkness.

Jesus essentially said, "The darkness is upon you because the darkness is within you, and the darkness within you can be expelled if you repent."

What does it mean to repent?

It means you are a sinner and turn from it.

It means to change your life.

It means to be converted, to turn around, to become a part of God's kingdom.

Metanoe, it means "a total change

**2 Timothy 2:25-26**, *in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,<sup>26</sup> and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*

Repentance is on the path to acknowledging the truth.

Peter preached it on the Day of Pentecost, the very first sermon ever preached in the era of the church "repent and be baptized."

The message of repentance signals a spiritual crisis.

You are going the wrong direction. Change your whole life and come to Christ.

The reason, "the kingdom is at hand."

Jesus was saying the long awaited messianic rule is here. The kingdom is here.

We are ready to give you the promise of the Old Testament to fulfil the great anticipation of the prophets of the day when the land would be blessed and the people of God would dwell in the land. They would reign over their enemies and there would be rest and there would be peace.

The lion would lie down with the lamb, and all those wonderful things, and God would take out the stony heart and put a heart of flesh in His people and give them His Spirit and wash them with the water of regeneration. The great kingdom is here.

Tragically it had to be postponed. The actual, physical element of the kingdom had to be postponed.

We have the rule of Messiah in our lives. Repentance is necessary. From that time, from the beginning of His ministry from that time on Jesus preached repentance.

The preaching of Jesus is not only that He preached with certainty, but that He preached with authority. There is only one way to preach with authority.

The Word of an authoritative God. Jesus preached with absolute, unflinching authority.

**Matthew 7:28-29**, *And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup>for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

A preacher who is representing God, and that was Jesus. His source was God, and so He preached with certainty, with authority, and with a divine commission.

His message today is still the same!

Be converted, turn around, turn around, and as in that day He went to the neediest people where He would get the widest acceptance to begin His ministry, before He tackled the hard part, in order that He might gather a group of believing people.

So today He comes to the neediest heart.

The heart that has been prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit and is receptive, and there He begins His conversion work.

It's the same work because it's the same message, same Christ.

What a joy it is to be able to stand in the tradition of Jesus Christ?

For all who responded in Galilee, Judea, through the ages of the church, the kingdom of God has come in a spiritual sense.

The light dawned in Galilee. Jesus began to preach and to save people.