

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 4

**Ver. 1.** *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit*, etc.] The Evangelist having finished his account of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; of his ministry and baptism; and particularly of the baptism of Christ; when the Holy Ghost came down upon him in a visible and eminent manner; whereby he was anointed for his public work, according to (<sup><2610></sup>Isaiah 61:1) proceeds to give a narration of his temptations by Satan, which immediately followed his baptism; and of those conflicts he had with the enemy of mankind before he entered on his public ministry. The occasion, nature, and success of these temptations are here related. The occasion of them, or the opportunity given to the tempter, is spoken of in this and the following verse. In this may be observed the action of the Spirit in and upon Christ; he

*was led of the Spirit*: by “the Spirit” is meant the same spirit of God, which had descended and lighted on him in a bodily shape, with the gifts and graces of which he was anointed, in an extraordinary manner, for public service; of which he was “full”, (<sup><401></sup>Luke 4:1) not but that he was endowed with the Holy Ghost before which he received without measure from his Father; but now this more eminently and manifestly appeared and by this Spirit was he led; both the Syriac and the Persic versions read, “by the holy Spirit”. Being “led” by him, denotes an internal impulse of the Spirit in him, stirring him up, and putting him upon going into the wilderness: and this impulse being very strong and vehement, another Evangelist thus expresses it; “the Spirit driveth him, *εκβαλλει* thrusts him forth into the wilderness”, (<sup><4012></sup>Mark 1:12) though not against his will; to which was added an external impulse, or outward rapture, somewhat like that action of the Spirit on Philip. (<sup><4039></sup>Acts 8:39). When he is said to be led up, the meaning is, that he was led up from the low parts of the wilderness, where he was, to the higher and mountainous parts thereof, which were desolate and uninhabited. The place where he was led was “into the wilderness”, i.e. of Judea, into the more remote parts of it; for he was before in this wilderness, where John was preaching and baptizing; but in that part of it

which was inhabited. There was another part which was uninhabited, but by “wild beasts” and here Christ was led, and with these he was, (<sup><4013></sup>Mark 1:13) all alone, retired from the company of men; could have no assistance from any, and wholly destitute of any supply: so that Satan had a fair opportunity of trying his whole strength upon him; having all advantages on his side he could wish for. The end of his being led there, was

*to be tempted of the devil:* by “the devil” is meant “Satan” the prince of devils, the enemy of mankind, the old serpent, who has his name here from accusing and calumniating; so the Syriac calls him *axrq l ka*, the accuser, or publisher of accusations. He was the accuser of God to men, and is the accuser of men to God; his principal business is to tempt, and Christ was brought here to be tempted by him, that he might be tried before he entered on his public work; that he might be in all things like unto his brethren; that he might have a heart as man, as well as power, as God, to succour them that are tempted; and that Satan, whose works he came to destroy, might have a specimen of his power, and expect, in a short time, the ruin of his kingdom by him. The time when this was done was “then”; when Jesus had been baptized by John; when the Holy Ghost descended on him, and he was full of it; when he had such a testimony from his Father of his relation to him, affection for him, and delight in him; “then” was he led, “immediately”, as Mark says, (<sup><4012></sup>Mark 1:12). As soon as all this was done, directly upon this, he was had into the wilderness to be tempted by and to combat with Satan; and so it often is, that after sweet communion with God in his ordinances, after large discoveries of his love and interest in him follow sore temptations, trials, and exercises. There is a very great resemblance and conformity between Christ and his people in these things.

**Ver. 2.** *And when he had fasted forty days.* etc.] As Moses did, when he was about to deliver the law to the Israelites, (<sup><0248></sup>Exodus 34:28) and as Elijah did, when he bore his testimony for the Lord of hosts, (<sup><1198></sup>1 Kings 19:8) so did Christ, when he was about to publish the Gospel of his grace, and bear witness to the truth. “Forty nights” as well as days, are mentioned; partly to show that these were whole entire days, consisting of twenty four hours; and partly to distinguish this fast of Christ from the common fastings of the Jews, who used to eat in the night, though they fasted in the day: for according to their canons <sup>f193</sup>, they might eat and drink as soon as it was dark, and that till cock crowing; and others say, till break of day. Maimonides <sup>f194</sup> says, they might eat and drink at night, in all

fasts, except the ninth of Ab. What is very surprising in this fasting of our Lord, which was made and recorded, not for our imitation, is, that during the whole time he should not be attended with hunger; for it is added,

*he was afterwards an hungered*; that is, as Luke says, “when” the “forty” days “were ended”, (~~QD~~Luke 4:2) which seized upon him, and is related, both to express the reality of his human nature, which though miraculously supported for so long a time without food, and insensible of hunger, yet at length had appetite for food; and also that very advantageous opportunity Satan had to attack him in the manner he did, with his first temptation.

**Ver. 3.** *And when the tempter came to him.* etc.] By “the tempter”, is meant the devil, (see ~~QD~~1 Thessalonians 3:5) so called, because it is his principal work and business, in which he employs himself, to solicit men to sin; and tempt them either to deny, or call in question the being of God, arraign his perfections, murmur at his providences, and disbelieve his promises. When he is here said to come to Christ at the end of forty days and nights, we are not to suppose, that he now first began to tempt him; for the other Evangelists expressly say, that he was tempted of him forty days, (~~QD~~Mark 1:13 ~~QD~~Luke 4:2) but he now appeared openly, and in a visible shape: all the forty days and nights before, he had been tempting him secretly and inwardly; suggesting things suitable to, and taking the advantage of the solitary and desolate condition he was in. But finding these suggestions and temptations unsuccessful, and observing him to be an hungered, he puts on a visible form, and with an articulate, audible voice, he said,

*if thou be the Son of God*; either doubting of his divine sonship, calling it in question, and putting him upon doing so too; wherefore it is no wonder that the children of God should be assaulted with the like temptation: or else arguing from it, “if”, or “seeing thou art the Son of God”; for he must know that he was, by the voice which came from heaven, and declared it: and certain it is, that the devils both knew, and were obliged to confess that Jesus was the Son of God, (~~QD~~Luke 4:41) by which is meant, not a good, or righteous man, or one dear to God, and in an office; but a divine person, one possessed of almighty power; and therefore, as a proof and demonstration of it, he urges him to

*command that these stones be made bread*, pointing to some which lay hard by;  $\epsilon\iota\pi\epsilon$ , “say” but the word, and it will be done. He did not doubt but he was able to do it, by a word speaking; but he would have had him to

have done it at his motion, which would have been enough for his purpose; who wanted to have him obedient to him: and he might hope the rather to succeed in this temptation, because Christ was now an hungry; and because he had carried his point with our first parents, by tempting them to eat of the forbidden fruit.

**Ver. 4.** *But he answered and said, it is written*, etc.] The passage referred to, and cited, is in (<sup><ARB></sup>Deuteronomy 8:3) the manner of citing it is what was common and usual with the Jews; and is often to be met with in the Talmudic writings; who, when they produce any passage of scripture, say **bytkd**, “as it is written”. The meaning of this scripture is; not that as the body lives by bread, so the soul lives by the word of God, and doctrines of the Gospel; though this is a certain truth: or that man lives by obedience to the commands of God, as was promised to the Israelites in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; but that God, in satisfying man’s hunger, and in supporting and preserving his life, is not tied to bread only, but can make use of other means, and order whatever he pleases to answer these ends; as, by raining manna from heaven, which is mentioned in the passage cited; and therefore there was no occasion to change the nature of things, to turn stones into bread; since that was not so absolutely necessary to the sustenance of life, as that it could not be maintained without it. Our Lord hereby expresses his strong faith and confidence in God, that he was able to support him, and would do it, though in a wilderness, and destitute of supply; whereby he overcame this temptation of Satan. Christ, in this, and some following citations, bears a testimony to, and establishes the authority of the sacred writings; and though he was full of the Holy Ghost, makes them the rule of his conduct; which ought to be observed against those, who, under a pretence of the Spirit, deny the scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice and at the same time points out to us the safest and best method of opposing Satan’s temptations; namely, by applying to, and making use of the word of God.

**Ver. 5.** *Then the devil taketh him up*, etc.] This was done, not in a visionary way, but really and truly: Satan, by divine permission, and with the consent of Christ, which shows his great humiliation and condescension, had power over his body, to move it from place to place; in some such like manner as the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, (<sup><ARB></sup>Acts 8:39) he took him up, raised him above ground, and carried him through the air, “into, the holy city”: this was Jerusalem; for Luke expressly says,

*he brought him to Jerusalem*, (~~409~~ Luke 4:9) called so, because of the presence, worship, and service of God, which had been in it, though then in a great measure gone; and according to the common notions of the Jews, who say <sup>f195</sup> Jerusalem was more holy than any other cities in the land, and that because of the Shekinah. The inscription on one side of their shekels was *ϸδϻη ργ[ μλ ϸωϛγ*, “Jerusalem, the holy city” <sup>f196</sup>. Satan frequents all sorts of places; men are no where free from his temptations; Christ himself was not in the holy city, no nor in the holy temple; hither also he had him,

*and setteth him upon a pinnacle*, or “wing of the temple”. In this place <sup>f197</sup> the Jews set James, the brother of Christ, and from it cast him down headlong: this was the *ακρον* “the summit”, or “top” of it; and intends either the roof encompassed with battlements, to keep persons from falling off; or the top of the porch before the temple, which was 120 cubits high; or the top of the royal gallery, built by Herod, which was of such an height, that if a man looked down from it, he soon became dizzy <sup>f198</sup>. The view Satan had in setting him here appears in the next verse.

**Ver. 6.** *And saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God*, etc.] He addresses him after the same manner as before; if, or seeing,

*thou art the Son of God*, show thyself to be so; give proof of thy sonship before all the priests which are in and about the temple, and before all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

*cast thyself down* that is, from the pinnacle of the temple: for since thou art the Son of God, no hurt will come to thee; thou wilt be in the utmost safety; and this will at once be a full demonstration to all the people, that thou art the Son of God: for hither Satan brought him, hoping to have got an advantage of him publicly; otherwise, had his view only been to have got him to cast himself down from any place of eminence, and so to have destroyed himself, he might have set him upon any other precipice; but he chose to have it done in the sight of the people, and in the holy city, and holy place. Let it be observed, that Satan did not offer to cast him down himself; for this was not in his power, nor within his permission, which reached only to tempt; and besides, would not have answered his end; for that would have been his own sin, and not Christ’s: accordingly, we may observe, that when he seeks the lives of men, he does not attempt to destroy them himself, but always puts them upon doing it. To proceed,

Satan not only argues from his divine power, as the Son of God, that he would be safe in casting himself down; but observing the advantageous use Christ made of the scriptures, transforms himself into an angel of light, and cites scripture too, to encourage him to this action; assuring him of the protection of angels. The passage cited is (<sup><1911></sup>Psalm 91:11,12) which expresses God's tender care and concern for his people, in charging the angels with the guardianship and preservation of them, in all their ways, that they might be secured from sin and danger. It does not appear that Satan was wrong in the application of this passage to Christ; for since it respects all the righteous in general, why not Christ as man? the head, as well as the members? And certain it is, that angels had the charge of him, did watch over him, and were a guard about him; the angels of God ascended, and descended on him; they were employed in preserving him from Herod's malice in his infancy; they ministered to him here in the wilderness, and attended him in his agony in the garden: but what Satan failed in, and that wilfully, and wickedly, was, in omitting that part of it,

*to keep thee in all thy ways*; which he saw was contrary to his purpose, and would have spoiled his design at once; and also in urging this passage, which only regards godly persons, in the way of their duty, to countenance actions which are out of the way of a man's calling, or which he is not called unto; and which are contrary to religion, and a tempting God. Satan before tempted Christ to distrust the providence of God, and now he tempts him to presume upon it: in like manner he deals with men, when he argues from the doctrines of predestination and providence to the disuse of means, for their good, either for this life, or that which is to come; and if he tempted the Son of God to destroy himself, it is no wonder that the saints should be sometimes harassed with this temptation.

**Ver. 7.** *Jesus saith unto him, it is written again*, etc.] Christ takes no notice of the false and wrong citation of scripture made by the devil, nor of any misapplication of it; but mildly replies, by opposing another passage of scripture to him, (<sup><1916></sup>Deuteronomy 6:16)

*ye shall not tempt the Lord your God*, thereby tacitly showing, that he had produced scripture to a very wrong purpose, since that could never contradict itself; and also, that for a person to neglect the ordinary means of safety, and to expect, that as God can, so he will, preserve without the use of such means, is a tempting him. The Hebrew word **wsnt** "tempt", as Manasseh ben <sup>f199</sup> Israel observes, is always taken in an ill part, and is to be

understood of such who would try the power, goodness, or will of God. And which, as it is not fitting it should be done by any man, so not by himself; and perhaps he hereby intimates too, that he himself was God; and therefore as it was not right in him to tempt God the Father, by taking such a step as Satan solicited him to; nor would it be right in any other; so it was iniquitous in the devil to tempt him who was God over all, blessed for ever.

**Ver. 8.** *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain,* etc.] That is, he took him off from the pinnacle of the temple, and carried him through the air, to one of the mountains which were round about Jerusalem; or to some very high mountain at a greater distance; but what mountain is not certain; nor can it be known; nor is it of any moment; it has been said<sup>f200</sup> to be Mount Lebanon: here he

*sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and glory of them.* By “all the kingdoms of the world” are meant, not only the Roman empire, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, though that was, to be sure, the greatest in the world at that time; but all the kingdoms in the whole world, which subsisted in any form, whether within, or independent of the Roman empire; or whether greater or lesser: and by “the glory of them”, is meant, the riches, pomp, power, and grandeur of them. Now the view which Satan gave Christ of all this, was not by a representation of them in a picture, or in a map, or in any geographical tables, as<sup>f201</sup> some have thought; since to do this there was no need to take him up into a mountain, and that an exceeding high one; for this might have been done in a valley, as well as in a mountain: and yet it could not be a true and real sight of these things he gave him; for there is no mountain in the world, from whence can be beheld anyone kingdom, much less all the kingdoms of the world; and still less the riches, glory, pomp, and power of them: but this was a fictitious, delusive representation, which Satan was permitted to make; to cover which, and that it might be thought to be real, he took Christ into an high mountain; where he proposed an object externally to his sight, and internally to his imagination, which represented, in appearance, the whole world, and all its glory. Xiphilinus<sup>f202</sup> reports of Severus, that he dreamed, he was had by a certain person, to a place where he could look all around him, and from thence he beheld *πασαν μεν την γην, πασαν δε την ψαλασσαν* “all the earth, and also all the sea”; which was all in imagination. Satan thought to have imposed on Christ this way, but failed in his attempt. Luke says, this was done

*in a moment of time*, in the twinkling of an eye; as these two phrases are joined together, (<sup><465></sup>1 Corinthians 15:52) or “in a point of time”. The word *στιγμη*, used by (<sup><404></sup>Luke 4:5) sometimes signifies a mathematical point, which Zeno says <sup>f203</sup> is the end of the line, and the least mark; to which the allusion may be here, and designs the smallest part of time that can be conceived of. Antoninus the emperor uses the word, as here, for a point of time; and says <sup>f204</sup>, that the time of human life, and the whole present time, is but *στιγμη* a point. Would you know what a moment, or point of time is, according to the calculation of the Jewish doctors, take the account as follows; though in it they differ: a moment, say they <sup>f205</sup>, is the fifty six thousandth, elsewhere <sup>f206</sup>, the fifty eight thousandth, and in another place <sup>f207</sup>, the fifty three thousandth and eight hundredth and forty eighth, or, according to another account <sup>f208</sup>, eighty eighth part of an hour. If this could be thought to be a true and exact account of a moment, or point of time, it was a very short space of time indeed, in which the devil showed to Christ the kingdoms of this world, and their glory; but this is not more surprising than his vanity, pride, and impudence, in the following verse.

**Ver. 9.** *And saith unto him, all these things will I give thee* etc.] This is more fully and strongly expressed by the Evangelist Luke. (<sup><404></sup>Luke 4:6,7).

*And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it — all shall be thine.* In which words he sets up himself to be the God of this world, and the sovereign disposer of it: he pretends it was delivered to him by the true God, who had left it to his arbitrary disposal; and that he could invest Christ with the power and government of it, and put him in possession of all its glory, and make good and support his title to it, and interest in it. Never was such monstrous arrogance expressed as this; when this poor, proud, wretched creature, has not the disposal, at his pleasure, of anyone single thing; no not the least in the whole universe. He could not touch, neither Job’s person, nor any of his substance, without divine permission; nor enter into an herd of swine without Christ’s leave; and yet had the front to make an offer of the whole world, as if he had a despotic power over it; and that upon this horrid and blasphemous condition,

*if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* This was the highest degree of effrontery and impudence. The devil is not content to be worshipped by men, but seeks for adoration from the Son of God: this opens at once his



proud, ambitious, and aspiring views, to be as God himself; for with nothing less can he be satisfied.

**Ver. 10.** *Then saith Jesus to him, get thee hence, Satan.* etc.] In (<sup><QMS></sup>Luke 4:8) it is “get thee behind me”: and so some copies read here, and is expressive of indignation and abhorrence; (see <sup><QMS></sup>Matthew 16:23) rebuking his impudence, and detesting his impiety: he had borne his insults and temptations with great patience; he had answered him with mildness and gentleness; but now his behaviour to him was intolerable, which obliged him to show his resentment, exert his power and authority, and rid himself at once of so vile a creature; giving this reason for it;

*for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* The place referred to is in (<sup><QMS></sup>Deuteronomy 6:13)

*thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him:* to fear the Lord, and to worship him, is the same thing. Worship includes both an internal and external reverence of God: the word “only” is not in the original text, but is added by our Lord; and that very justly; partly to express the emphasis which is on the word “him”; and in perfect agreement with the context, which requires it; since it follows,

*ye shall not go after other Gods.* Moreover, not to take notice of the Septuagint version, in which the word “only” is also added, Josephus <sup>f209</sup>, the Jewish historian, referring to this law, says, because God is one, **καὶ δεῖ τοῦτον σεβέσθαι μόνον**, “therefore he only is to be worshipped”. And Aben Ezra <sup>f210</sup>, a Jewish writer, explaining the last clause in the verse,

*and thou shalt swear by his name,* uses the word “only”; and which indeed, of right, belongs to every clause in it. The meaning of our Lord in citing it is; that since the Lord God is the alone object of worship, it was horrid blasphemy in Satan to desire it might be given to him, and which could not be done without the greatest impiety.

**Ver. 11.** *Then the devil leaveth him,* etc.] In (<sup><QMS></sup>Luke 4:13) it says,

*when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season, or until a season.* That is, having tempted him with all sorts of temptations, and tried him every way to no purpose; having gone through, and finished the whole scheme and course of temptations he had devised, without success; and having orders from Christ to depart, which he was obliged to obey, leaves him for a while, till another opportunity of tempting

him in some other way should offer; or till the time came, when he should be so far able to get the advantage of him, as to bruise his heel, or bring him to the dust of death; (see <sup><4140></sup>John 14:30 <sup><4225></sup>Luke 22:53) and when he was gone, better company came in his room;

*behold, angels came and ministered to him.* They came to him in a visible, human form, as they were used to do under the Old Testament dispensation, and that after the temptation was over; after Satan was foiled, and was gone; that it might appear that Christ alone had got the victory over him, without any help or assistance from them. When they were come, they “ministered to him”; that is, they brought him food of their own preparing and dressing, as they formerly did to Elijah, (<sup><1195></sup>1 Kings 19:5,6,7,8) to satisfy his hunger, and refresh his animal spirits; which had underwent a very great fatigue during this length of time, in which he fasted, and was tempted by Satan. Thus, as the angels are ministring spirits to the heirs of salvation, both in a temporal and in a spiritual sense, (<sup><3014></sup>Hebrews 1:14) so they were to Christ. Nothing is more frequent with the Jews than to call the angels *trçh ykal m* “ministring angels”: it would be needless and endless to refer to particular places.

**Ver. 12.** *Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison,* etc.] John was cast into prison by Herod; the reason of it may be seen in (<sup><4143></sup>Matthew 14:3,4). The prison into which he was cast, according to Josephus <sup>f211</sup>, was the castle of Machaeras: here he continued some time before he was put to death; for from hence he sent two disciples to Jesus, to know if he was the Messiah, (<sup><4112></sup>Matthew 11:2). Now when Jesus heard of this his imprisonment,

*he departed into Galilee;* not so much on account of safety, or for fear of Herod, but to call his disciples, who lived in that country.

**Ver. 13.** *And leaving Nazareth,* etc.] Where he was educated, and had lived many years together; and where he preached first to the good liking of the people, who

*wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth:* though afterwards they were so much displeased with him, that they thrust him out of their city; and intended to have destroyed him, by casting him down headlong from the brow of an hill; and which seems to be the reason of his leaving this city; (see <sup><4016></sup>Luke 4:16-31)

*he came and dwelt in Capernaum* a city of Galilee. (<sup><206></sup>Luke 4:31)

*which is upon the sea-coast* by the sea of Tiberias, or Genesareth

*in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim*: it bordered on both these tribes; it signifies “the village of consolation”<sup>f212</sup>; and so it was, whilst the consolation of Israel dwelt there. The Jews speak very evilly of it: no doubt because it was the dwelling place of Christ; and because there might be some in it who believed in him: they represent the inhabitants of it as very great sinners, heretics, and dealers in magic art. Chanina, the brother’s son of R. Joshua, they say<sup>f213</sup>, went to Capernaum, and the heretics did something to him; according to the gloss, they bewitched him: and elsewhere<sup>f214</sup> explaining the words in (<sup><207></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:26)

*Who so pleaseth God*, etc.]; this, they say, is Chananiah, the brother’s son of R. Joshua; and “the sinner”; these are the “children”, or inhabitants of Capernaum. Thus they show their spite against the very place in which Christ dwelt.

**Ver. 14, 15.** *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken*, etc.] Christ’s dwelling in Capernaum accomplished a prophecy of the prophet (<sup><208></sup>Isaiah 9:1,2) and he went and dwelt there, that it might be fulfilled which he had spoken: the meaning of which prophecy is<sup>f215</sup>, that as those parts of the land of Israel, there mentioned, had suffered much by Tiglathpileser, who had carried them captive, (<sup><209></sup>2 Kings 15:29) and is “the vexation” referred to; so they should be honoured, and made very glorious, by the presence and conversation of the Messiah among them, and which now had its literal fulfilment: for Christ now came and dwelt in Capernaum, which lay between the lands and upon the borders both of Zabulon and Nephthalim; was situated by the sea of Tiberias, beyond Jordan, and in, “Galilee of the nations”; the upper Galilee, which had in it people of other nations besides Jews. The ancient Jews expected the Messiah to make his first appearance in Galilee; which expectation must be grounded on this prophecy; for so they say<sup>f216</sup> expressly,

“the king Messiah shall be revealed **l y l g d a [ r a b**, “in the land of Galilee.””

And in another place<sup>f217</sup> explaining (<sup><210></sup>Isaiah 2:19) they paraphrase it thus,

““for fear of the Lord”; this is the indignation of the whole world: and for the “glory of his majesty”; this is the Messiah; when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth, when he shall arise and be revealed **l y l g d a [ r a b**, “in the land of Galilee”: because that this is the first place to be destroyed in the holy land; therefore he shall be revealed there the first of all places.”

Here Jesus, the true Messiah, made his first appearance publicly; here he called his disciples, and began his ministry.

(See Gill on “~~4044~~ Matthew 4:14”)

**Ver. 16.** *The people which sat in darkness*, etc.] The inhabitants of Galilee, who sat or “walked”, as in Isaiah; that is, continued in spiritual darkness, in ignorance, blindness, error, and infidelity, “saw great light”; Christ himself, who came a light into the world; he conversed with them, preached unto them, and opened the eyes of their understandings to behold his glory, and to know him, and salvation by him.

*And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death*: the same persons who sit in darkness, sit also in the region of death; for such are dead in trespasses and sins: where there is no spiritual light, there is no spiritual life, and such are in danger of the second death; but the happiness of these people was, that to them “light is sprung up”, like the rising sun, and this without their asking or seeking for: Christ, the sun of righteousness, arose upon them, without any desert, desire, or expectation of theirs, with healing in his wings; and cured them of their darkness and deadness, turned them from darkness to light, and caused them to pass from death to life. “Light” is not only a character under which Christ frequently goes in the New Testament, (see ~~4006~~ John 1:4-8,9 ~~4009~~ John 3:19 ~~4012~~ John 8:12 ~~4016~~ John 12:46) but is one of the names by which the Messiah was known under the Old Testament; (see ~~4022~~ Daniel 2:22 ~~4043~~ Psalm 43:3) and which the Jews give unto him: says R. Aba <sup>f218</sup> Serungia, “and the light dwelleth with him”; this is the king Messiah. The note of R. Sol. Jarchi on these words, “send forth thy light”, is, the king Messiah; who is compared to light, according to (~~4027~~ Psalm 132:17) the days of the Messiah are by them said to <sup>f219</sup> be **hrwa ymy** “days of light”; and so these Galilaeans found them to be; as all do, to whom the Gospel of Christ comes with power and demonstration of the Spirit. And these days of light first begun in the land of Zabulon which, according to Philo the Jew <sup>f220</sup>, was

“**συμβολον φωτος**, “a symbol of light”; since (adds he) its name signifies the nature of night; but, the night removing, and departing, light necessarily arises.”

As did, in a spiritual sense, here, when Christ the light arose.

**Ver. 17.** *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say*, etc.] Not from the time he dwelt in Capernaum; for he had preached in Nazareth before he came there, (<sup><4046></sup>Luke 4:16, 31) nor from the time of John’s being cast into prison; for he had preached, and made disciples, who were baptized by his orders, before John’s imprisonment, (<sup><4047></sup>John 3:22, 24-26) (<sup><4048></sup>John 4:1) but from the time that Satan left tempting him; as soon as that combat was over, immediately he went into Galilee, began to preach, and called his disciples. The words with which he began his ministry are the same with which John begun his; which shows the entire agreement between them, in that they not only preached the same doctrine, but in the same words; (See Gill on “<sup><4049></sup>Matthew 3:2”)

**Ver. 18.** *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee*, etc.] Not for his recreation and diversion, or by accident: but on purpose to look out for, and call some, whom he had chosen to be his disciples. And as he was walking about, to and fro, he “saw two” persons; and as soon as he saw them, he knew them to be those he had determined to make his apostles: and these are described by their relation to each other, “brethren”; not merely because they were of the same nation, or of the same religion, or of the same employ and business of life, but because they were of the same blood; and by their names, “Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother”. Simon is the same name with <sup>^</sup>w[ mç, “Simeon”; and so he is called, (<sup><4050></sup>Acts 15:14) and which, in the Jerusalem dialect, is read <sup>^</sup>wmys, “Simon”. His surname “Peter”, which was afterwards given him by Christ, (<sup><4051></sup>Matthew 16:18 <sup><4052></sup>John 1:42) is Greek, and answers to “Cephas”, signifying a “rock”: though this name is to be met with in the Talmudic <sup>f221</sup>writings, where we read of R. Jose, **srj yp rb**, “bar Petros”. This his surname is added here, to distinguish him from Simon, the Canaanite. The name of his brother Andrew is generally thought to be Greek; though some have derived it from **rdn**, “to vow”, and is also to be observed in the writings of the Jews <sup>f222</sup>; where mention is made of R. Chanina, **yyrdna rb** bar Andrei. They are further described by the work they were at, or business they were employed in,

*casting a net into the sea*; either in order to catch fish in it, or to wash it, (<sup><408></sup>Luke 5:2) and the reason of their so doing is added; “for they were fishers”. Of this mean employment were the very first persons Christ was pleased to call to the work of the ministry; men of no education, who made no figure in life, but were despicable and contemptible: this he did, to make it appear, that they were not qualified for such service of themselves; that all their gifts and qualifications were from him; to show his own power; to confound the wisdom of the wise; and to let men see, that none ought to glory in themselves, but in him. The Jews have a notion of the word of God and prophecy being received and embraced only by such sort of persons: says R. Isaac Arama <sup>f223</sup>,

“his word came to heal all, but some particular persons only receive it; and who of all men are of a dull understanding, **μyh ydb [ μygyyd**, “fishermen, who do business in the sea”: this is what is written; “they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord”: these seem not indeed fit to receive anything that belongs to the understanding, because of their dulness; and yet these receive the truth of prophecy and vision, because they believe his word.”

I cannot but think, that some respect is had to these fishers, in (<sup><3470></sup>Ezekiel 47:10) “it shall come to pass that fishers shall stand upon it”: that is, upon, or by the river of waters, said in (<sup><3408></sup>Ezekiel 47:8) to “issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert”: which both R. Jarchi and Kimchi understand of the sea of Tiberias; the same with the sea of Galilee, by which Christ walked; and where he found these fishers at work, and called them. See also (<sup><2466></sup>Jeremiah 16:16)

**Ver. 19.** *And he saith unto them, follow me*, etc.] These two brethren had been the disciples of John, as Theophylact thinks, and which seems agreeable to (<sup><4035></sup>John 1:35-40) and though through John’s pointing out Christ unto them, they had some knowledge of him, and conversation with him, yet they abode with him but for that day, (<sup><4035></sup>John 1:37,38,39) and afterwards returned to their master; and upon his imprisonment, betook themselves to their former employment: from whence Christ now calls them to be his disciples, saying “follow me”, or “come after me”: that is, be a disciple of mine; (see <sup><4147></sup>Luke 14:27). And to encourage them to it, makes use of this argument; “and”, or “for”, I “will make you fishers of men”: you shall be fishers still, but in a higher sense; and in a far more

noble employment, and to much better purpose. The net they were to spread and cast was the Gospel, (see <sup><4034></sup>Matthew 13:47) for Christ made them not **hrwt ygyd**, “fishers of the law”, to use the words of Maimonides <sup>f224</sup>, but fishers of the Gospel. The sea into which they were to cast the net was first Judea, and then the whole world; the fish they were to catch were the souls of men, both among Jews and Gentiles; of whose conversion and faith they were to be the happy instruments: now none could make them fishers in this sense, or fit them for such service, and succeed them in it, but Christ; and who here promises it unto them.

**Ver. 20.** *And they straightway left their nets*, etc.] That is, as soon as he had called them, they left their worldly employment, and followed him; they gave up themselves to his service, and became his disciples; they not only left their “nets”, but their fishing boats, and fishing trade, and all that belonged to it, even all their substance; and also their relations, friends, and acquaintance, (see <sup><4037></sup>Matthew 19:27) which shows what a mighty power went along with the words and call of Christ; and what a ready, cheerful, and voluntary subjection this produces, wherever it takes place.

**Ver. 21.** *And going on from thence, he saw other two*, etc.] When he had gone but a little way further, (<sup><4019></sup>Mark 1:19) he spied two other persons he was looking for, and had designed to call to the office of apostleship; and these are also described as “brethren”, and by name,

*James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.* The Jews make mention in their writings <sup>f225</sup>, of one **ydbz rb bq[y r**, “R. James, the son of Zebedee”: which Capellus <sup>f226</sup> conjectures is the very same person here mentioned: but the James they speak of as a disciple of Jesus, they call **hanym bq[y**, “James the heretic” <sup>f227</sup>; who, they say, was of the village of Secaniah, and sometimes of the village of Sama. His brother’s name was John, who was the Evangelist, as well as Apostle: these were

*in a ship with Zebedee their father.* Men of this name, and sons of men of this name, were very common among the Jewish Rabbins; but neither this man, nor his sons, were masters or doctors in Israel; for such Christ chose not for his apostles. It seems to be the same name with Zebadiah, (<sup><1370></sup>1 Chronicles 27:7) these, with him, were “mending their nets”, which were broken, and needed repairing; and perhaps being poor, could not afford to buy new ones: this shows their industry and diligence, and may be a pattern

and example to persons, closely to attend the business of their calling, whilst the providence of God continues them in it.

*And he called them:* from their employment, to follow him, and become his disciples; and no doubt gave them the same promise and encouragement he had given the two former.

**Ver. 22.** *And they immediately left the ship*, etc.] More is expressed here than before, for they not only left their nets, but their ship too; which was of much more value; nay, even “their father” also, “with the hired servants”, (<sup><4003></sup>Mark 1:20) and so complied with the call of Christ to his people, (<sup><4950></sup>Psalms 45:10) and thereby proved, that they were sincerely his followers, (<sup><4246></sup>Luke 14:26) and might expect the gracious promise of Christ to be made good unto them, (<sup><4028></sup>Matthew 19:28,29).

**Ver. 23.** *And Jesus went about all Galilee*, etc.] Having called four of his disciples, he took a tour throughout Galilee; a country mean and despicable, inhabited by persons poor, illiterate, vile, and wicked: such had the first fruits of Christ’s ministry, and messages of his grace; which shows the freeness, sovereignty, and riches, of his abounding goodness. He went about “all” this country, both upper and nether Galilee, which was very populous: Josephus says <sup>f228</sup>, there were two hundred and four cities and towns in it; he means, which were places of note, besides villages. He went about, not like Satan, seeking the destruction of men; but as one that went along with him says, “doing good”, (<sup><4408></sup>Acts 10:38), both to the bodies and souls of men; for he was

*teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.*

The places where he taught were “their synagogues”: he did not creep into private houses, as the Pharisees then, and false apostles afterwards did; but he appeared openly, and declared his doctrine in places of public worship; where the Jews met together for divine service, to pray, read the Scriptures, and give a word of exhortation to the people; for though they had but one temple, which was at Jerusalem, they had many synagogues, or meeting places, all over the land: here Christ not only prayed and read, but “preached”; and the subject matter of his ministry was, “the Gospel of the kingdom”: that is, the good news of the kingdom of the Messiah being come, and which now took place; wherefore he exhorted them to repent of, and relinquish their former principles; to receive the doctrines, and submit to the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation: he also preached to them the things concerning the kingdom of heaven; as that except a man be



born again, he cannot see it; and unless he has a better righteousness than his own, he cannot enter into it: he was also

*healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.* It is in the Greek text, “every sickness and every disease”; that is, all sorts of maladies, disorders and distempers, which attend the bodies of men; and is another instance, besides (<sup><40B5</sup>Matthew 3:5) in which the word “all”, or “every”, is to be taken in a limited and restrained sense, for “some”, or “some of all sorts”; which teaches us how to understand those phrases, when used in the doctrine of redemption by Christ.

**Ver. 24.** *And his fame went throughout all Syria,* etc.] For his ministry and miracles, especially the latter; wherefore

*they brought to him,* that is, out of Syria, the sick. Syria was in some respects reckoned as the land of Israel, though in others not.

“The <sup>f229</sup> Rabbins teach, that in three respects Syria was like to the land of Israel, and in three to the countries with out the land: the dust defiled, as without the land; he that sold his servant to (one in) Syria, was as if he sold him to one without the land; and he that brought a bill of divorce from Syria, as if he brought it from without the land: and in three things it was like to the land of Israel; it was bound to tithes, and to the observance of the seventh year; and he that would go into it, might go into it with purity and he that purchased a field in Syria, was as if he had purchased one in the suburbs of Jerusalem.”

*All sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments.* This expresses in general, the grievous and tormenting diseases with which the persons were afflicted, who were brought to Christ for healing: some particular ones follow;

*and those which were possessed with devils;* in body as well as in mind; of which there were many instances, permitted by God on purpose, that Christ might have an opportunity of showing his power over those evil spirits.

*And those which were lunatic;* either melancholy persons, or mad and distracted men; that retired from the conversation of men, into fields or desert places: or such, whose disorders were influenced by the change of the moon; such as those who are troubled with the falling sickness; so the

Greeks <sup>f230</sup> call such persons **σεληνιαζο-μενους** the word here used by the Evangelist.

*And those that had the palsy.* These were each of them such disorders, as were incurable by the art of medicine; or for which rarely, and with great difficulty, any manner of relief could be obtained; and

*he healed them;* without any means, by a word speaking; which showed him more than a man, and truly and properly God.

**Ver. 25.** *And there followed him great multitudes of people,* etc.] Some on one account, and some on another; some out of good will, others out of ill will; some for the healing of their bodies, others for the good of their souls; some to see his miracles, others to hear his doctrine; and what with one and another, the concourse of people that followed him was greater than that which followed John. The Greek word for “multitude” is adopted into the Talmudic language, and is often used by the doctors; who have a tradition to this purpose, that **awbr μυζζm htwj p aswl kwa `ya**, “there is no multitude less than sixty myriads” <sup>f231</sup>; but we are not to imagine, that when here, and elsewhere, a multitude is said to follow, or attend on Christ, that he had such a number of people after him as this; only that the number was very large. The places from whence they came are particularly mentioned, as “from Galilee”; where he had called his disciples, had been preaching the Gospel, and healing all manner of diseases; and therefore it is not to be wondered at that he should have a large number of followers from hence. This country was divided into <sup>f232</sup> three parts:

“There was upper Galilee, and nether Galilee, and the valley from Capharhananiah and upwards: all that part which did not bring forth sycamine trees was upper Galilee, and from Capharhananiah downwards: all that part which did bring forth sycamine trees was nether Galilee; and the coast of Tiberias was the valley.”

Frequent mention is made in the Talmudic <sup>f233</sup> writings of upper Galilee, as distinct from the other.

*And from Decapolis;* a tract of land so called, from the “ten cities” that were in it; and which, according to Pliny <sup>f234</sup> were these following; Damascus, Opton, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippondion, Pella, Galasa, and Canatha; (see **ⲏⲚⲓ** Mark 5:20 **ⲏⲐⲟⲩⲑ** Mark 7:31)

“And from Jerusalem”; the metropolis of the whole land; for his fame had reached that great city, and there were some there, curious and desirous to see him, and hear him; though he was got into those distant and obscure parts.

*And from Judea*; from the other parts of it:

*and from beyond Jordan*; which was a distinct country of itself, known by the name of Peraea; so called, perhaps, from *περᾶν*, the word here translated, “from beyond”. It is to be observed, that here are three countries distinctly mentioned, Galilee, Judea, and “beyond Jordan”; which was the division of the land of Israel; of these three lands the Talmudists often speak.

“It is a tradition of the Rabbins <sup>f235</sup>, that in three countries they intercalate the year; Judea, and beyond Jordan, and Galilee.”

Again <sup>f236</sup>,

“There are three lands, that are obliged to the removing of fruits; Judea, and beyond Jordan, and Galilee.”

Once more <sup>f237</sup>,

“There are three countries for celebration of marriages, Judea, and “beyond Jordan”, and Galilee.”

The account which <sup>f238</sup> Maimonides gives of these three countries is this;

“The land of Judea, all of it, the mountain, the plain, and the valley, are one country beyond Jordan, all of it, the plain of Lydda, and the mountain of the plain of Lydda, and from Betheron to the sea, are one country: Galilee, all of it, the upper and nether, and the coast of Tiberias, are one country.”

The country beyond Jordan was not so much esteemed as what was properly the land of Canaan, or Israel; for the Jews <sup>f239</sup> say,

“the land of Israel is holier than all lands; because they bring out of it the sheaf, the first fruits, and the showbread, which they do not bring from other lands: the land of Canaan is holier than beyond Jordan; the land of Canaan is fit to be the habitation of the Shekinah; beyond Jordan is not.”

This, they say <sup>f240</sup>, was not the land flowing with milk and honey.