

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XXX. Christ's Great Light Ministry In Capernaum
(Matthew 4:13-17; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32)

I. Introduction

- A. Christ's rejection by His hometown people of Nazareth necessitated His relocation to another town, and He moved to Capernaum and proceeded to have a powerful ministry of the Word of God there.
- B. This ministry fulfilled Old Testament prophecy at Isaiah 9:1-2, and the context of that passage offers insight on how we are to conduct effective ministries today. We view the passages involved (Matthew 4:13-17; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32 with Isaiah 8:19-9:2) for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Great Light Ministry In Capernaum, Matthew 4:13-17; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32.

- A. After Jesus' townspeople tried to kill Him by throwing Him down the steep hill south of Nazareth, He escaped their effort and moved to Capernaum, Luke 4:30-31. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 141-142) The word "dwelt" (Matthew 4:13 KJV) describing Jesus' stay in Capernaum "signifies 'to take up residence,'" meaning that Capernaum became Jesus' home at this time, *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- B. Matthew 4:13-16 reveals that this relocation fulfilled the Isaiah 9:1-2 prophecy that Messiah as the "Great Light" from God would illumine "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" where the people of Israel who sat in spiritual darkness and the shadow of death would be graciously treated with God's "Great Light."
- C. Significantly, "Capernaum was located on the border between Zebulun and Naphtali along the Sea of Galilee," and Isaiah had indicated that "in that remote place light would shine to those in darkness," *Ibid.*
- D. Mark 1:21-22 and Luke 4:31-32 described the fulfillment of Isaiah's "Great Light" prophecy, noting that when Jesus entered the synagogue at Capernaum and taught, the congregation was "astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes," Mark 1:22. The passage in Luke 4:32 ESV that relates this event explained that Jesus' delivery "possessed authority." The scribes merely cited other rabbinical authorities on the Scripture passages they addressed where Jesus taught as One Who Himself asserted what Scripture taught, doing so in the power of the Holy Spirit, cf. Matthew 3:16-17; Isaiah 11:1-2.
- E. The context of the Isaiah 9:1-2 "Great Light" prophecy explains the dynamics behind Christ's effective ministry, and it provides application for us who minister in the Church era today, Isaiah 8:19-9:2 ESV:
 - 1. Recalling that there are no chapter breaks in the autograph manuscripts, back in Isaiah 8:19 ESV, God's prophet Isaiah had critiqued the people of Judah who were seeking advice from "mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter" in going to the dead to know how to handle their anxiety of the threat of potential enemy invaders of Judah when they should have enquired of the Lord.
 - 2. Isaiah had added that if the people did not speak according to the saying, "To the teaching and to the testimony," what amounts to today's saying, "Get back to the Bible," it was because they had no spiritual dawn, not even the hope of greater enlightenment in the truth, Isaiah 8:20 ESV.
 - 3. Accordingly, the people would pass through the land seeking spiritual insight, being greatly distressed and hungry for meaningful direction and hope, but not finding it, Isaiah 8:21a ESV.
 - 4. Their frustration would lead to rage where they would speak contemptuously against their king and their God as they looked up to the authorities above them, but not get any answers (Isaiah 8:21b ESV), and they would then look downward to subordinates in desperation for insight and there behold only distress, darkness, the gloom of anguish, and be thrust into thick darkness of depression and fear, Isaiah 8:22 ESV.
 - 5. Eventually, the Assyrians invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel and greatly plagued the Hebrews who had lived in the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali (2 Kings 15:29), Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Isaiah 9:1.
 - 6. However, in great unmerited favor, the former gloom of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali would be made glorious as the people who had sat in darkness would see God's "Great Light" of the Messiah and God Incarnate Lord Jesus, and upon them the light would shine. Filled with the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-2) Who had authored Scripture through the Scripture writers (cf. 2 Peter 1:21), Messiah would preach God's Word with authority, clarifying the truth and giving edifying direction to the area's needy people!

Lesson: *Filled with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God as God's "Great Light" ministered in Capernaum, the once spiritually distraught region of Zebulun and Naphtali, astonishing His listeners with God's authoritative Word!*

Application: *May we minister Scripture in reliance on the Holy Spirit to edify listeners who are in darkness today!*