

Matthew 4:12-17. Christ Takes Up His Abode at Capernaum.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus' presence and preaching brought glory to the sequestered spots of Zebulun and Naphtali, but the light of the Gospel did not shine into the hearts of the people, warning us of the importance of repentance.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 9:1, Matthew 4:16, Luke 10:13, Acts 3:19

Topics: "Missionary Work", "Repentance"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer emphasizes how Jesus chose to dwell in the most neglected and ignorant parts of Canaan out of pity for the marginalized, inspiring us to follow His example by reaching out to the forgotten and overlooked in society. By fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy in Zebulun and Naphtali, Jesus brought glory to these once afflicted regions through the preaching of the Gospel, highlighting the transformative power of God's Word. The Gospel is likened to a great light that brings peace and joy, contrasting the darkness and despair of those who have not heard it, underscoring the importance of sharing the message of salvation. Despite the light of Christ shining upon them, some cities like Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida faced judgment for their lack of repentance, serving as a warning for us to continually seek repentance as the foundation of true religion.

Transcript

The Lord Jesus chose to reside principally in the most ignorant part of Canaan; he selected the part at the greatest distance from Jerusalem, and which bordered on the wicked cities of Tyre and Sidon. And what led him to do this? Was it not pity for the ignorant and neglected? There are some who are now employed in visiting the courts and alleys of great cities, and some who are going into desolate villages, and some who are leaving their country to dwell among the heathen. Are they not walking in the steps of their Master?

Jesus fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah, by preaching in Zebulun and Naphtali. The words in the prophecy are difficult to understand, but learned men have offered a satisfactory explanation. Let us first read the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1- "Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will soon be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory." What is the sense of the passage? It is this--Once the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were afflicted,

(because, being situated on the borders of Canaan, they were exposed to the invasions of the enemy,) but afterwards they were "filled with glory." How? By the preaching of the Gospel. Yes, the Savior by his presence and preaching bestowed glory on those sequestered spots.

How great a blessing is the Gospel! it may well be compared to a great light, for it sheds peace and joy around it. How melancholy is the condition of those who do not hear the Gospel! Well may they be said "to sit in darkness and the shadow of death." They sit on the very brink of hell. We sometimes see a smiling village, seated on the side of a verdant hill, full of neat cottages and blooming gardens. We feel disposed to exclaim, "O! what a lovely spot!" But if the Gospel is not known there, it is, in the sight of God and of angels, a dismal place; while on the gloomiest, darkest alley, where Christ's word is heard, they look with joy.

In vain, however, the great light shone upon the people of Zebulon and Naphtali; for the light did not shine into their hearts. Christ afterwards pronounced a woe upon some of their cities, Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, because they repented not.

Let us take warning from this. If God does not shine into our hearts, in vain for us are the splendors of the noonday sun; in vain the clearest, most affecting preaching; even the preaching of Christ himself.

And about what did Jesus preach? Repentance. And why did he preach "repentance?" Because sorrow for sin and turning from it is the beginning of true religion; but though it is the beginning, it must never cease upon earth. As Philip Henry said, "Repentance shall follow me to the gates of heaven." Rowland Hill also observed, that if he could regret anything when he entered heaven, it would be that he would no more shed the penitential tear. There is no true religion without repentance. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." May God bestow it upon each of us!

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