

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:  
A Biography of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ –  
A Christ Centered Profile Of Evangelism  
And Disciple-Making**

**Matthew 4:18-22**

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

*March 29, 2009 – Morning Sermon*

This is our last study of the first four chapters of Matthew. We will be coming back to the Sermon on the Mount later. I would like to invite you back tonight for our study of Joseph. I am very excited about the impact of Joseph in each of our lives. Read Genesis 44 in preparation and come back and join us tonight as we conclude the Lord's Day in praise to God and around His Word. Joseph is a man who demonstrates confidence in the providence of God. Next Sunday will be our Holy Week services and we will begin with Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry of Christ and in the bulletin on that Sunday will be a devotional guide so that you can follow the steps of Jesus devotionally from Palm Sunday to Resurrection (Sabbath) Sunday. You can use those for personal and family devotions and they will coincide with our worship services. Maundy Thursday we will be having communion where we come to the tables and we will also have a dramatic presentation of the Lord's Supper that night. Then on Good Friday from 12 to 1pm as our Savior was upon the cross He uttered seven statements that we want to focus upon with reflection, meditation, singing and prayer here at Briarwood. Then as the Lord rested in the grave on Saturday the Sabbath, we also will rest from our meetings and then we will gather on the Resurrection Sabbath, the Lord's Day, for celebration that morning and a concert that evening. Next Sunday night a dramatist George Sarris will be here and I know you will really appreciate God's Word presented there as well. I look forward to the Holy Week services with you. Let us look at the text for this study in Matthew 4:18-22;

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he (Jesus) saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And 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, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

The grass withers and the flower fades. This is the Word of God. It abides forever. By His grace and mercy may it be preached for you. I love to read biographies. I probably try to read four, five, or six a year. They are intriguing to me. As I read Christian biographies sometimes I confess something to you. I read the first chapter and then I will jump to the last chapter. One of the reasons even with biographies that I do that is because one of the things that fascinates me is how believers die. It absolutely fascinates me. I have a little book that I keep where I write down the last words of believers, missionaries, preachers, theologians, and Christians. Many things are intriguing to me about their last words but one of the reasons why I like last words is because you really cut to the chase. If I've only got so much breath or such few moments I am going to say what's crucial upon my heart. I'm not going to be talking about what's peripheral. I'm going to be talking about what's important.

Of course, we hear Jesus' last words on the cross and we will be looking at those on Good Friday but there is another place that He has last words. It's right before the ascension of Christ. Now when that occurs this is His last opportunity to speak face-to-face with the disciples. He's not going to be talking about something peripheral. He's not going to be talking about something trivial. He is going to be talking about what is crucial and what does He do? He gives what we call the great commission to His disciples and to us the church. Matthew 28:19, 20 says, *19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

I want to tell you something else about last words. I love to take the last words and see how they line up with someone's life. How do the last words line up with their life? Jesus' last words to us, His last commandment, our first priority is to go and make disciples, right? What about His life? In Matthew 4, the text, having brought us through the birth, the baptism and temptation, now introduces us to the life and ministry of Jesus. In the last study we looked at this text beginning in verse 12 all the way through the end and we saw the summation of Jesus' life and ministry; preaching, proclaiming, teaching the Kingdom of God. He was preaching, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." That was right there as the summation of His life at the initiation of His ministry. I had asked you for the privilege this Sunday to come back to that text, having looked at the summation, preaching, teaching, healing, and having looked at the initiation He preached, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." I want to come back for a closer examination and as we come back, the text that we looked at last week showed us that Jesus from beginning to end did what He commands us to do when He ascended. As Jesus begins His ministry, as He continues His ministry, He is focused upon making disciples.

Here are the first disciples He made. How many disciples did Jesus call to Himself to follow Him directly? I am not trying to trick you. He called 12, right?

We are given background information on all 12 but only 7 are we given the details of their calling and their discipling, the direct details of it. Obviously, of those seven, four of them were Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Those four key disciples, two sets of two brothers and in this text they are the first ones identified that Jesus calls to Himself. Let's now look at this text a little bit closer. Let's surround it. If Jesus calls us to make disciples then I can look back at Jesus' life of evangelism and disciple making and as I look at it I can go to the very first one and ask what are the lessons about evangelism and disciple making that I pick up from it? I am going to draw some out for you.

Let's start off by looking closer at Matthew 4:18; *While walking by the Sea of Galilee...* The Sea of Galilee is over 700 feet below sea level. It's the lowest freshwater sea in the world. It is 13 miles long and 6 to 8 miles wide, shaped somewhat like a harp. In the days of Jesus according to one of the historians named Josephus, when he was stationed at Tiberius, said that in the first century there were 245 fishing vessels on that sea making their living. It is a sea that gives water for drinking and irrigation. It is a sea that supported people with food being fish and it supported many as a way of living. Of those 245 fishing vessels, I know where two of those boats belong to, at least two. One belonged to James and John and one belonged to Andrew and Peter. My guess is they had more than that. In fact John tells us that they were partners in business as well. I guess the father of James and John who was Zebedee was the chief partner but they were all partners together and they plied their trade on the Sea of Galilee.

Now Jesus at Capernaum is walking by the Sea of Galilee and He comes to them. By the way, Peter was not from Capernaum. He was from next door known as Bethsaida but he had moved to Capernaum. James and John were from Capernaum and now Andrew is now in Capernaum. Look at what happens next in Matthew 4:18; *he (Jesus) saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.* I just love that sentence and I want you to remember that sentence. They were casting a net into the sea, why? It was because they were fishermen. Any dummy can figure this out. What is a fishermen going to do? He is going to fish and so a fisherman will cast a net into the sea. So I love how this verse says they were casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen.

Now if you were fishermen there would have been three kinds of ways that you would have fished in the Sea of Galilee. One way would have been with a hook and line which is the same way we do it today or perhaps the same way you do it today because I do not like to fish. I like to fish for men but I don't like to fish. I have been fishing two times in my life and I sat there for eight hours and did not catch a single thing. I could have played three rounds of golf during that time so I do not fish but I have studied for this sermon. So a second way they would fish would be to use a net called an amphibistrion or casting net. Notice the word in the name of the net. Amphibious, land or sea, this was a net that you could stand on the land, throw it into the sea and with a draw cord, draw it together and

capture the fish that had come in in the warmth of the evening. That is the one that Peter and Andrew are using. They are using the net, casting it into the sea and pulling in some fish probably towards the end of the day.

So Jesus comes up to them and what does He say to them? Matthew 4:19 says, *And he(Jesus) said to them, "Follow me..."* In the original language it means literally "come after me." Come to where I am and follow me. (Matthew 4:19) *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* Jesus gives a command. He gives them a call; come and follow Me. Then He gives them a promise. Not "I can", not "If you want me to" but "Come and follow Me." What will be the result? Here is the promise. I will make you not fishers of fish but I will make you fishers of men. So very clearly Jesus has a command, He has a call and then He gives a promise - I will make you fishers of men. They then responded.

Look at their response in Matthew 4:20; *Immediately they left their nets and followed him.* We are going to have the joy of going through the Gospels and finding out how He will make them fishers of men. In fact, if you think Peter is casting a net on the side of the sea, wait to you see him stand up in Acts 2 and cast a net in 3000 fish come to Jesus. Jesus is going to teach them how to be fishers of men. He is going to fulfill His promise as they respond to His call. He doesn't stop with Peter and Andrew. Matthew 4:21 says, *And 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, and he called them.* Remember when I said hook and line and the casting net?

There is a third way to fish and that is with a drag net. That was a net where the fishermen would go out in a couple of boats and they would put the net on one boat and then they would tie the net on the other boat. The boats would then sail and they would sail in a circle where the school of fish were and then as they would come together they would pull the net together and with the drag net they would drag together all of the fish between the two boats. It is that net that they had probably been doing all day. This was probably done in the evening so they have been out fishing or they are getting ready to go out fishing in the middle of the night and they are preparing the nets.

Jesus comes up to them and what does He say to them? They have a different net but notice the call is the same. He said to them, "Follow Me." So He comes to James and John and their father as they are mending their nets, and *He called them.* What did they do? Matthew 4:22 says, *Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

Let's take a look and see what has happened here. We have four of the disciples that Jesus has called. You will notice that the call is singular. There were not different calls. He says to Peter and Andrew, "Follow Me." What does He call James and John to do? He calls them to follow Him. What will He say to everyone as we go through the Gospel of Matthew whenever He encounters

someone? He will say, "Come, follow Me." The call is the same.

But the situation of those being called is different. Peter and Andrew are casting a net on the side of the sea. James and John are mending a net and are in a boat. They are not on the side of the sea. They are in boat mending their nets. They are with their father Zebedee. In fact in the Gospel of Mark, a parallel text to this, tells us that the boats were even filled with some of their employees or servants. The call is the same to all four men but their situation is different.

But their response is the same. Immediately Peter and Andrew leave the net and follow Jesus. Immediately John and James left the boat, the net, their father and they followed Jesus. So the call is the same; "Come, and follow Me." The call is singular. The circumstances of those being called are different but the response is identical and those responding are very different.

They are making the same response by coming and following Jesus but there are four very different men. Andrew, we will find out as he follows Jesus, is going to be the quiet bringer of others to Jesus. Peter, the tempestuous, with hoof and mouth disease, heart and mouth disease, everything else that you can imagine, the preacher's favorite living illustration, is constantly giving us illustrations. James will be the first martyr to give his life for Christ. John will be the last disciple, the one entrusted with the mother of Jesus, yet James and John in the life of Jesus will be arguing "which one of us gets the greater position, which one of us gets the greater seat?" Here are four very different men.

The call is singular. The circumstances of those called are different. Those who are called respond identically. They come and they follow. They leave and they trust. Those who come and follow are very different as the Lord makes them fishers of men. Andrew will bring them in one fish at a time. Peter will bring them in 3,000 and 4,000 at a time. One other thing from the text is the promise is the same to all four; "Follow Me and I will make *you* fishers of men." Every follower of Jesus will be made a fisher of man.

I want to give you one basic lesson here from this text. So I will give you one lesson about evangelism and discipleship from this and some implications I would like to flush out but clearly, if it's a singular call then the call that goes out to everyone is "Come and follow Jesus. Come and trust and surrender to Jesus." The promise to everyone who does that is that Jesus will make you fishers of men. I'd like to stop now and go fishing. I'd like to cast the net and call you to come and follow Jesus Christ. We're not fishing for fish, we are fishing for men so we have a different net. That net is the Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. I want to invite you to come to Him.

You will notice that the invitation is intensely personal. It doesn't say "Come to a religion." It doesn't say "Come to a ritual." Jesus says, "Come follow Me." It is Person to person. Come follow Me. One may say, "Harry I don't want to." Then

you are rejecting Jesus. You are not rejecting me. You are not rejecting Christianity. You are not rejecting the church. You are saying “no” to Jesus. May I invite you to immediately say “yes” to Him? One may say, “Harry do you think I really ought to surrender to Jesus?” Yes but may I with all of my heart as bare as I can before you say, it is not a question of if you will surrender. It’s a question of to what are you going to surrender? You will either surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or you will surrender to sin. When you surrender to sin, I don’t care how it is painted, profiled or displayed but I will tell you it will bring emptiness. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). If you surrender to sin and say “no” to Christ then there is not only eternal death. “Depart from Me you workers of lawlessness, I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). There is death now. There are the deaths of hopes in life that are meaningful. There are deaths of families and marriages. There are the death of hopes, dreams and reality. Sin brings brokenness, chaos, despair and death.

So I say today why will you die? I invite you to freely come to Him who freely gave His life on the cross that you might life eternal. Come follow Jesus. Surrender to Jesus because He will never leave you and He will never forsake you. He will uphold you. He will ever intercede for you. He will take you to glory. What is really interesting is that Jesus invites you to Himself and here’s the way we normally think about it. Jesus is inviting me to trust Him to go to heaven. No it’s not that way. Jesus is inviting you to Himself. He says, “Come to Me and I will take you to heaven.” It’s not come to heaven and by the way you get Me. It’s come to Me and I will take you to heaven. He says, “I will forgive you of your sins. I will save you. I will give you a new spirit. I will give you a new heart. I will give you a new life. I will give you a new home. I will give you an eternity of joy in Me and on the way I will make you fishers of men. So that not only have you come to Me but through you I will bring others to Myself.”

Isn’t that amazing? What is very clear is that this matter of evangelism of coming to Christ, bringing people to Christ and following Christ is not an event. Now it’s decisive. Immediately they followed Him but this isn’t the first time or the last time Jesus is dealing with these guys. One may say, “This is the first time. It just came up in Matthew 4.” No, how many Gospels do we have? We have 4 and this is not the first time Jesus has dealt with these men. He has already dealt with them at least one time before. I will show you this.

Before this event that we have been looking at there was another event and it is in John 1. Before Jesus arrives at Capernaum He is with John. John 1:35-37 says, *35 The next day again John (John the Baptist) was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.* John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus sees Him and says, “There He is! Behold the Lamb of God! This is the Messiah!” Two of John’s disciples then follow Jesus.

Now who are these two disciples? John 1:38-42 says,

*38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*

Now before this episode on the sea when Jesus was with John the Baptist and John the Baptist affirms that Jesus is the Messiah there were two fishermen that were following John the Baptist. One of them was named Andrew and the other one is not named. Those two then leave John the Baptist according to his direction and they follow Jesus.

Jesus turned to them and says, "What do you want?" They say, "We want to be with You. Where are You staying?" Notice this. I want a personal relationship with You. So they go to be with Him. As they follow Him one of the brother's names was Andrew so he went and got his brother Peter and he brought him. Not only is evangelism and discipleship personal but it's also a process. The Lord is working. Sometimes He's planting and sometimes He's cultivating. As you evangelize it's a process. Conversion is an event but evangelism and discipleship are a process.

By the way here is pure speculation. There is another disciple that never got named. Guess whose habit in his Gospel never refers to himself by name? It is John. It is very likely that the other disciple with Andrew was John and Andrew went and got his brother Peter. My guess is that John probably went and got his brother James. This is not the first time. By the way now that they have immediately left their nets and followed Jesus that's not going to be the last time He teaches them about following Him and being a fisher of men. There is John 1, Matthew 4 and let me take you to another one.

A third occasion of evangelism and discipleship happens in Luke 5 in the life of Peter, James, Andrew and John. Luke 5:1-11 says, </p>

*1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to*

*Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

<p>John 1 they followed Him, Peter, James, John and Andrew, follow Him. Matthew 4, come follow Me and they left their nets to follow Him. The third time Jesus gets into a boat. He begins to teach His disciples and when He gets through He says to Peter, "Peter lets go fishing." Peter says, "Lord, we have been out all night fishing." Jesus says, "Well let's go out in the deep and by the way put your nets on this side." I love what Peter says here and this is pure speculation on my part but I think this is what Peter said. Peter said, "Lord, we the professional fishermen, have been out fishing all night and we've caught nothing but at Your command, Son of a carpenter, we'll go out and put the nets." All these nets get filled and they have to bring out more boats. The nets keep filling up and filling up and Jesus says, "Look I brought you out here to teach you something. You follow Me and I will make you fishers of men and wait till you see all the boats from all the nations I'm going to raise up to take care of these fish that we catch with that Gospel net." It's a different kind of fish and a different kind of net. Men, women, boys and girls from every possible circumstance coming to Jesus saved and then by God's grace He makes them through disciple making fishers of men.

Let me finish with this thought. D.L. Moody gave an illustration that became the inspiration for a song. We need to sing this song sometime. How many have heard of the song, *Let the Lower Lights be Burning?* Send the beams across the waves it says. Let the lower lights be burning, send the beams across the waves not up here but down here where the waves are, the lower lights. That song was made because of an event that D.L. Moody told his church about. Around Lake Erie, the shores of Cleveland, there are some jetties. There is a lighthouse. Sometimes the clouds are high and sometimes they are low and sometimes they are both but they have two sets of lights on the lighthouse that revolve, one low, one high. On that particular stormy night only the lights that were high were working so the captain set the course wrong and they hit the jetty. Every seaman was lost because the lower lights had not been burning.

The lights of heaven are burning. What about the lower lights, us, are we sending



the Gospel where we live, work, where people are struggling? In all of those different circumstances are we sending the Gospel and the Light of Christ to our teams, to our schools, to our classrooms, where we work, and our associations? Send the lower lights. I want you to come to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you come to Christ it may not require you leaving your occupation. You may not be called to be a missionary or preacher but I will tell you for every one of you who come to Christ you will have a new preoccupation. Christ is all. Everything else is death. Him, He is all and then He will use you to bring others to Himself. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Please take a few moments for silent prayer. Today there are probably two sets of people reading this. One are hearing the call – from your situation come immediately, nets, family, everything, let nothing hold you back. Come to Christ. Some of you have done that. Perhaps the world has been calling you away and you keep going back to the nets then today Jesus is calling you again afresh, follow Me. Brothers and sisters for all of you that have come and follow Him would you this day ask the Lord to give us that Gospel drag net and make us fishers of men and we would be so blessed of the Lord that there would have to be churches after churches after churches planted as the nets fill up, more boats are needed. Holy Spirit please speak to our hearts now. O Lord, we make these prayers from our hearts to You in Jesus' name, Jesus who saves, Amen.

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