



THE ROYAL COMPLEX - The King's News - Matthew 4:12-17 - January 9-15

Main Idea: The messengers come and go, but the message endures forever

Look Back (Remind yourselves of the challenge from last week)

Last week you were challenged to memorize the three scripture passages that Jesus used in his temptation against the Devil. Did this memorization challenge have any effect on the temptations you face in your life?

Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)

Read Matthew 4:12-17 together.

These verses represent a major turning point not only in the book of Matthew, but in the life of Jesus. This is where his ministry really begins. While there had been much preparation, from the circumstances of his birth to his baptism to his temptation and wilderness trial, the time has come for Jesus to begin the work that will lead to the cross, and ultimately to his victorious resurrection.

It's interesting to note here what sparks this change. John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, was a central figure in the last chapter during Jesus' baptism. His lifestyle, choices, and message were both a precursor to the ministry of Jesus but also an example of what a true disciple of Jesus would be like.

This short statement, then, that “John had been put in prison,” is significant. It set wheels into motion. Not only is John taken from center stage in the message of repentance, but it requires Jesus to move physical locations, as the meaning of “withdrew” (NIV) in the original language has strong connotations to the idea of fleeing from persecution.

Thus, Jesus’ ministry begins. He takes the baton from John, fulfills a further prophecy of himself as Messiah, and preaches the very same message of John from Matthew 3:2. The time of John has passed, and the time of Jesus has begun.

Discussion Question: How do you think Jesus felt when hearing that John had been arrested? What emotions might he be dealing with during this time, facing both the grief of John’s loss and the beginning of his public responsibilities? Do you think Jesus saw connections between John’s end and his own?

Sometimes it’s helpful to see the gospel as a relay race. The runners come and go, and while their time holding the baton is important, ultimately they are just a vessel carrying a greater purpose than themselves. In this story John starts the race, Jesus takes it to another level, and in Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28, he hands it off to us.

Discussion Question: Spend some time sharing with each other the people who have “passed the baton” of the gospel to you. Who have been the most influential people in your own story of faith? What messages of hope and encouragement do you think they’d give to you right now?

Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)

The messengers come and go, but the message endures forever. The call to repent, to turn away from a life of sin and embrace the life of salvation is for all people in all places at all times. There are those that come before us, and there are those who will come after. Our job is to receive, proclaim, and pass it forward.

Discussion Question: Which of those three responsibilities has been the biggest struggle for you? Why do you think that is? Which one has God been working on the most in your life recently?

Challenge: Consider who is next in line in the relay race of the gospel. Who will run the race after you? Challenge yourself this week to have one touch point with this person, providing encouragement and support for the future of the gospel message.

Prayer challenge: Pray together for those who will come after us, for the strength and hope needed for them to carry the gospel forward.