

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

Matthew 4:12–17

“The King Comes into the Darkness”

Preaching Date: April 26, 2026

Opening Prayer

Ask God to give us reverence under His Word. Ask Him to show us Christ as the promised light, the reigning King, and the One who enters the darkness to save sinners. Ask Him to expose our love of darkness, bring us to true repentance, and cause us to bow gladly under the gracious rule of Christ.

Recap

In Matthew 4:12–17, Jesus begins His public ministry not in Jerusalem’s center of prestige, but in Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, a place marked by old judgment, darkness, and reproach. Matthew tells us this was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s promise that light would dawn upon those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Jesus comes as the promised King, bringing the saving reign of God into history.

Understanding the Text

1. Why does Matthew draw attention to the fact that Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, rather than in Jerusalem?
2. What is the significance of John’s imprisonment in verse 12, and how does it show both human opposition and divine providence?
3. How does Matthew use Isaiah 9 to explain the meaning of Jesus’ move to Galilee, and what does that teach us about fulfillment in Matthew’s Gospel?
4. What does it mean that the people were “sitting in darkness” and in “the land and shadow of death”? What kind of darkness is chiefly in view?
5. In what sense is Jesus Himself the “great light” promised in Isaiah, and why is this more than merely the arrival of better teaching or moral reform?
6. What does Jesus mean when He says, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and how are repentance and faith related to one another?
7. How does this passage present the kingdom as both already present in Christ’s coming and yet awaiting its full consummation?

Personal Reflection & Application

1. What part of your life are you most tempted to keep under your own rule rather than submitting to Christ as King?
2. Are there particular sins you have addressed only in general terms rather than repenting of them specifically and plainly before the Lord?

3. How does it strengthen your hope to know that Christ brings light to places marked by shame, guilt, failure, and long-standing darkness?
4. How can you more intentionally live under the reign of Christ this week in your home, work, speech, habits, and witness to others?

God Has More to Say

Christ the promised light and King

Isaiah 9:1–7

Luke 1:78–79

John 1:4–9

John 8:12

Matthew 12:15–21

Human darkness, sin, and death

Psalms 107:10–14

Isaiah 8:19–22

Ephesians 4:17–19

Ephesians 5:8–14

1 Peter 2:9–10

The kingdom of God in Christ

Daniel 7:13–14

Matthew 12:28

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–50

Luke 17:20–21

Revelation 11:15

Repentance, faith, and the grace of salvation

Isaiah 55:6–7

Mark 1:14–15

Acts 3:19

Acts 20:21

Romans 3:21–26

Providence, mission, and the nations

Genesis 50:20

Psalms 2:7–12

Isaiah 42:1–4

Matthew 28:18–20

Acts 13:47–49