

Matthew Survey, Section 1

Beginning of Christ's Ministry — 5 Prophetic Issues

Lessons 25–28 • Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Section

Lessons 25–28 survey the commencement of the Lord's public ministry as recorded in Matthew 4:12 through the end of chapter 7. Keith identifies five prophetically declared components to this beginning, tracing each carefully against the Old Testament backdrop — Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah — to demonstrate that every aspect of how Christ commenced his ministry was foretold by the prophets. Lesson 25 establishes the structural framework: the signal (John cast into prison, Matt. 4:12) triggers the commencement, and the five prophetic issues are introduced. Lessons 26–27 work through Issues 1–4 in detail — Galilee honored first, the gospel of the kingdom preached, the special children gathered, and the signs of the kingdom manifested. Lesson 28 concludes Issue 4 with an extended treatment of the “powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:5) and introduces Issue 5 — the Sermon on the Mount — as the Lord's foundational doctrinal ministry for the edification of the believing remnant.



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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 25	Introduction: the signal (John cast into prison, Matt. 4:12) triggers the commencement; five prophetic issues previewed; Issue 1 introduced — Galilee honored first (Isa. 9:1–2)
Lesson 26	Issues 1–3: Galilee completed (Isa. 9:1–2; 8:13–20); Lord preaches gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Isa. 61:1–3; Luke 4:14–21); special children gathered (Matt. 4:18–22; Isa. 8:18; Jer. 16:16; Matt. 19:27–28); Issue 4 introduced
Lesson 27	Issue 4 (Part 1): two hallmark signs of the kingdom — healing physical infirmities (Isa. 33–35) and casting out unclean spirits (Zech. 13:2); “shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom” (Luke 8:1–3; Matt. 10:1)
Lesson 28	Issue 4 concluded (Matt. 12:28–29; Luke 10:9–11; Mark 5:1–10; Matt. 16:3–4; Heb. 2:3–4; 6:4–5 — “powers of the world to come”); Issue 5 introduced — Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–2; Isa. 8:16–20)

Lesson Summaries

L25

Introduction: The Signal & Five Prophetic Issues *Matthew 4:12 and the Commencement of the Lord's Public Ministry*

The Signal: John Cast Into Prison

- Matthew 4:12 records the precise trigger: when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he withdrew into Galilee. John's preparatory ministry is complete; the Messiah's public ministry now commences in fulfillment of the prophets.
 - Mark 1:14; John 3:22–30 — "He must increase, I must decrease" — John's appointed role fulfilled and finished

Five Prophetically Declared Components (Matt. 4:12–ch.7)

- Keith identifies five distinct issues that the prophets declared would characterize the commencement of the Lord's public ministry, all encompassed within Matthew 4:12 through the end of chapter 7:
 - Issue 1: Honoring the land of Galilee first (Matt. 4:12–16; Isa. 9:1–2)
 - Issue 2: Preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Isa. 61:1–3)
 - Issue 3: Gathering a special class of children — the twelve apostles (Matt. 4:18–22; Isa. 8:18)
 - Issue 4: Manifesting the signs of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23–25)
 - Issue 5: Exposing Israel's vain religious system — the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7)

Issue 1 Introduced: Galilee Honored First

- The Lord goes to Zebulon and Naphtali — the most despised portion of the land, contemptuously called "Galilee of the Gentiles" under Israel's vain religious system. Yet Isaiah 9:1–2 declares that this land of darkness would see a great light first. The Lord fulfills this precisely, honoring that land by commencing his ministry there.

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Issues 1–3: Galilee, Gospel of the Kingdom, Special Children Called *Matthew 4:12–22; Isaiah 9; 61; Jeremiah 16:16; Isaiah 8:18*

Issue 1 Completed: Galilee — Most Afflicted, Honored First

- Isaiah 9:1–2 explains why Galilee must be honored first: Zebulon and Naphtali bore the heaviest afflictions in the courses of punishment, most despised by the vain religious establishment. The Lord turns this around — the most looked-down-upon region sees the light of the Messiah first.
 - Isaiah 8:13–20 — light is not in the vain religious system; the Lord himself is the sanctuary and the stumbling stone

Issue 2: Lord Preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom

- Matthew 4:17 — "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Isaiah 61:1–3 had prophesied that the Messiah would preach good tidings to the meek and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
 - Luke 4:14–21 — Lord opens Isaiah 61 in the Nazareth synagogue: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"

Issue 3: Gathering the Special Children (Matt. 4:18–22)

- The calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John begins the gathering of the special class of children spoken of in Isaiah 8:18: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and wonders in

Israel.” These twelve are the ones who will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes in the kingdom.

- Jeremiah 16:16 — “I will send for many fishers... and for many hunters” — the twelve fulfill this prophesied role
- Matthew 10:1–8 — their commission fulfills Isaiah 8:18 as they perform signs and wonders in the land
- Matthew 19:27–28 — twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the established kingdom

Issue 4 Introduced: Signs of the Kingdom

- Matthew 4:23–25 introduces the fourth component: the Lord heals all manner of sickness and disease, and casts out devils. Keith notes that these signs fall into two hallmark categories to be developed fully in the next lessons.

Issue 4 (Part 1): Signs of the Kingdom — Two Hallmark Categories *Isaiah 33–35; Zechariah 13:2; Luke 8:1–3; Matthew 10:1*

Kingdom Background: What the Signs Are Foretastes Of

- Before examining the signs themselves, Keith surveys Isaiah 33–35 to establish what the signs foretaste. Isaiah 33:24 declares that in the kingdom “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” Isaiah 35:5–6 describes the kingdom blessings: “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame man leap as a hart.”
 - Isaiah 25:8 — “He will swallow up death in victory; the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces” — hallmark feature of kingdom establishment
 - Isaiah 33–35 follow a looping parallelism: fourth installment → fifth installment → kingdom, adding doctrine at each pass

Hallmark Sign 1: Healing Physical Infirmities

- When the Lord heals all manner of sickness and disease, he performs a foretaste of the kingdom blessings declared in Isaiah 35. These healings validate that the kingdom of heaven really is at hand — they “shew the glad tidings of the kingdom” (Luke 8:1).
 - Luke 8:1–3 — “preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom” — preaching by words, shewing by signs and wonders
 - Matthew 10:1 — “heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” given to the twelve alongside power over unclean spirits

Hallmark Sign 2: Casting Out Unclean Spirits

- The second hallmark sign is casting unclean spirits out of the land of Israel. Zechariah 13:2 declares: “I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land” — a hallmark feature of the established kingdom. When the Lord casts out devils during the fourth installment, he gives a foretaste of this kingdom reality.
 - Zechariah 11–13 — Satan’s kingdom is headquartered in Jerusalem during the fifth course; the land is infested with unclean spirits
 - Matthew 10:1 — “power against unclean spirits, to cast them out” — the two hallmark categories given together to the twelve

Both Categories Confirmed: Luke 8 & Matthew 10

- Luke 8:2 summarizes: “certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” — evil spirits (sign 2) and infirmities (sign 1). Every sign, wonder, and miracle of the Lord’s earthly ministry falls into one of these two hallmark categories, each a foretaste of the kingdom’s own glory.

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Issue 4 Concluded & Issue 5 Introduced: The Sermon on the Mount *Matthew 12:28–29; Hebrews 6:5; Matthew 5:1–2; Isaiah 8:16–20*

Signs Confirm the Kingdom Is at Hand (Matt. 12:22–29)

- The Lord casts a devil out of a blind and dumb man. The Pharisees attribute it to Beelzebub. The Lord refutes their stupidity and declares: “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (v. 28). Casting out the unclean spirit is binding the strong man — taking back his goods from Satan’s fortified house.
 - Luke 10:8–11 — the seventy sent out; “heal the sick... say, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” — signs force Israel’s hand
 - Mark 5:1–10 — Legion; unclean spirits beg not to be sent out of the country — confirms casting out = out of the land of Israel

Israel’s Leadership Indicted: Signs of the Times Rejected (Matt. 16:1–4)

- The Pharisees and Sadducees jointly demand a sign. The Lord indicts them: “O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” Their prolonged rejection of abundant sign testimony is condemned. Only the sign of Jonas remains, and then “he left them and departed.”

Powers of the World to Come: Hebrews 2 & 6

- Hebrews 2:3–4 declares that the great salvation “was confirmed... God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles.” Hebrews 6:5 identifies all these signs, wonders, and miracles as “the powers of the world to come” — advance demonstrations of the kingdom’s own power and glory.
 - Hebrews written to the remnant of Israel; the fourth installment signs confirm the message and function as foretaste of kingdom physical blessings

Issue 5 Introduced: The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–2)

- The fifth and final component is the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord goes up into a mountain, sits down, and the disciples come unto him. This is prophetically declared, not spontaneous. Isaiah 8:16 states: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” — exactly what the Lord does in Matthew 5–7.
 - Isaiah 8:20 — “if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” — indicts Israel’s vain religious system
 - Matthew 7:28–29 — “the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”

Purpose of the Sermon: Equipping the Remnant

- The corrective doctrine of Matthew 5–7 exposes every category of corruption in Israel’s vain religious system and provides the members of the remnant with the perfect law of liberty (James 1), equipping them to function as the light of the world and salt of the earth through the fourth and fifth installments and to be rewarded in the established kingdom.

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Signs, Wonders, and Miracles as “Powers of the World to Come”

The signs, wonders, and miracles of the Lord’s earthly ministry are not general demonstrations of divine power. They are specifically the “powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:5) — advance foretastes of the kingdom of heaven’s own blessings. Their function is to validate the reality of the gospel of the kingdom: the kingdom of heaven really is at hand, and the time schedule of Israel’s program has reached its climactic stage.

Two Hallmark Categories of Kingdom Signs — Not General Miracles

Every sign, wonder, and miracle of the kingdom falls into one of two hallmark categories: (1) the healing of physical infirmities — foretaste of Isaiah 35:5–6 kingdom blessings; and (2) the casting out of unclean spirits — foretaste of Zechariah 13:2 kingdom reality. Recognizing these two categories is essential for properly understanding all the Lord’s miracles in the gospel accounts and their doctrinal significance for Israel’s program.

The Gospel of the Kingdom Is Not Paul’s Gospel

The gospel preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the twelve in Matthew is the gospel of the kingdom — “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This is Israel’s prophetic program, not the message Paul was given for the dispensation of grace. Paul’s gospel (Romans 1–5) concerns justification by faith and the mystery of the Body of Christ. These are distinct messages for distinct programs and must not be conflated.

Israel’s Vain Religious System vs. Corrective Kingdom Doctrine

The Sermon on the Mount (Issue 5) addresses the fundamental problem of Israel’s vain religious system: the law had been corrupted and cast behind the backs of the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord comes to make the law honorable again (Isaiah 42:21), binding the testimony and sealing the law among his disciples (Isaiah 8:16). The remnant cannot function as light of the world and salt of the earth while under the bondage of that corrupt system — they need the corrective doctrine the Lord alone can provide.

Key Scripture References

Matt. 4:12–25	Commencement of the Lord’s public ministry — signal, gospel, children, signs
Isaiah 9:1–2	Zebulon and Naphtali honored first; Galilee of the Gentiles sees great light
Isaiah 8:16–18	Bind the testimony, seal the law; children for signs and wonders in Israel
Isaiah 8:20	No light in the vain religious system; to the law and to the testimony
Isaiah 33:24	Kingdom: “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick”

Isaiah 35:5–6	Blind opened, deaf unstopped, lame leaps — hallmark kingdom blessings foretasted in the signs
Isaiah 61:1–3	Gospel of the kingdom — good tidings to the meek; acceptable year of the Lord
Luke 4:14–21	Lord declares fulfillment of Isaiah 61 in the Nazareth synagogue
Zechariah 13:2	Unclean spirit to pass out of the land — hallmark kingdom reality
Jeremiah 16:16	Fishers and hunters — the twelve’s prophesied role
Matthew 10:1	Power over unclean spirits; heal all manner of sickness and disease
Luke 8:1–3	“Preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom”
Matt. 12:28–29	Kingdom of God come; casting out devils = binding the strong man
Luke 10:9–11	Heal the sick; “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you”
Mark 5:1–10	Legion; unclean spirits cast out of the land
Matt. 16:3–4	Discern the signs of the times; only sign of Jonas remains
Matt. 19:27–28	Twelve thrones; apostles judge twelve tribes of Israel in the kingdom
Hebrews 2:3–4	Signs and wonders bearing witness to the great salvation
Hebrews 6:4–5	“Powers of the world to come” — signs of the kingdom identified
Matthew 5:1–2	Sermon on the Mount begins; disciples come; Lord opens his mouth and teaches
Matt. 7:28–29	Astonished at his doctrine; taught as one having authority, not as the scribes
Isaiah 25:8	“He will swallow up death in victory; wipe away tears from all faces”

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