



The Sermon on the Mount Study
Bible Study Session 02
Matthew 4:23-52 : Topic 2.0

Study By
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Greek NT

4.23 Καὶ περιῆγεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ. 4.24 καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἡ ἀκοὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς ὅλην τὴν Συρίαν· καὶ προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ πᾶντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις καὶ βασάνοις συνεχομένους [καὶ] δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σελήνιαζομένους καὶ παραλυτικούς, καὶ ἔθεράπευσεν αὐτούς. 4.25 καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Δεκαπόλεως καὶ Ἱερουσολύμων καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.

5.1 Ἴδων δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· 5.2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων,

Gute Nachricht Bibel

4.23 Jesus zog durch ganz Galiläa. Er lehrte in den Synagogen und verkündete die Gute Nachricht, dass Gott jetzt seine Herrschaft aufrichten und sein Werk vollenden wird. Er heilte alle Krankheiten und Leiden im Volk. 24 Die Kunde von ihm verbreitete sich sogar in ganz Syrien. Die Leute brachten alle zu Jesus, die an irgendwelchen Krankheiten oder Beschwerden litten, auch Besessene, Epileptiker und Gelähmte, und er machte sie gesund. 25 Große Menschenmengen aus Galiläa, aus dem Gebiet der Zehn Städte, aus Jerusalem und Judäa und von der anderen Seite des Jordans zogen mit ihm.

5.1 Als Jesus die Menschenmenge sah, stieg er auf einen Berg und setzte sich. Seine Jünger traten zu ihm. 2a Dann begann er zu reden und lehrte sie, was Gott jetzt von seinem Volk verlangt.

NRSV

4.23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

5.1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

NLT

4.23 Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues, preaching everywhere the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed people who had every kind of sickness and disease. 24 News about him spread far beyond the borders of Galilee so that the sick were soon coming to be healed from as far away as Syria. And whatever their illness and pain, or if they were possessed by demons, or were epileptics, or were paralyzed – he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went – people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

5.1 One day as the crowds were gathering, Jesus went up the mountain-side with his disciples and sat down to teach them. 2 This is what he taught them:

The Study of the Text:¹

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

This passage is comprised of two natural units of thought expression. First, the summary narrative in 4:23-25 provides a periodic summation of Jesus' activities. Second, 5:1-2 functions as the narrative introduction to the Sermon² by setting up the scene for the words of Jesus. Both passages should be studied as a part of the Sermon. The reasons for this should become clear in the Exegesis of the Text below, as well as in subsequent studies.

Note about the above translations. The above translations to be listed in each of the studies represents a deliberate choice of translations with each having a distinct purpose. The **left column** will always contain the original language text of the Greek New Testament. The Greek text is taken from the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament*, fourth revised edition, which is also the same text as the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th edition. These two contemporary printed Greek New Testaments represent the most current as well as the best Greek text of the New Testament currently available. They stand as **the foundation** for most all translations of the New Testament portion of the Bible internationally in today's

¹Serious study of the biblical text must look at the 'then' meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the 'now' meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

²All references to Matt. 4:23-7:28 and Luke 6:17-7:1a will simply designate this material as the Sermon, for the sake of brevity of indication.

world. **Second**, *Die Gute Nachricht Bibel* is listed as a representative of a contemporary German Bible translation. The text is from the 1997 revision of this translation. **Third**, the *New Revised Standard Version* is one of the most widely read English translations today. It represents a Mixed Translation Method approach to Bible translation that incorporates elements of both the Formal Equivalent and Dynamic Equivalent methods of Bible translation. Right column. The *New Living Translation* represents an English translation utilizing mostly the Dynamic Equivalent method of Bible translation. This means the dominant focus is on clarity of expression and understandability by the Bible reader. It casts the biblical text in contemporary American English, just as *Die Gute Nachricht Bibel*, using very similar DE methods, does the same in German. Without knowledge of the original biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, the best way to get deeply into the scripture text is through comparative translation study in which the three or four translations being used represent the full range of Bible translation methodology. Elements of this will be incorporated into these studies, even though my foundational analysis comes directly from the Greek text of the New Testament.

Context of our passage:

The literary setting³ of any scripture passage is critically important to legitimate interpretation of a biblical text. Thus we will always include this aspect in our study of the Sermon. The literary context of 4:23-5:2 has two aspects. First, as an narrative introduction to the Sermon, and then as a connecting link of the Sermon to the rest of the gospel of Matthew. Its counterpart in 7:28-29 serves to reconnect the teaching text of the Sermon to the forward movement of the narrative in setting the stage for what happened next in Jesus' ministry.

As a connecting link of the Sermon to the rest of the first gospel, 4:23-5:2 serves to position the event of the Sermon in the early stages of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Donald Hagner (*Word Biblical Commentary*) summarizes this way:

The stage has now been carefully set. Jesus has been fully prepared through the baptism and temptations; he has moved to the north, where the prophet Isaiah said the fulfillment would begin; the summarizing rubric of the kingdom of heaven over all of Jesus' work has been spoken by him as it had by John the Baptist (v 17); and the disciples have been called. Now we encounter what is simultaneously a programmatic and summarizing statement of the ministry of Jesus before we embark upon Matthew's proper account of that teaching and healing ministry in detail.

We see Jesus rising to great popularity in Galilee quite rapidly in the beginning of His public ministry. People are coming from all over Palestine at great distances in order to hear Him, and to seek healing from Him. The outline below illustrates this external contextual setting of the Sermon:

Summary Outline⁴				
of				
THE LIFE OF CHRIST				
Matthew:	Mark:	Luke:	John:	
<hr/>				
I. Background and preparation for ministry				
1:1-2:23 (4%) ⁵	-	1:1-2:52 (11%)	1:1-18 (2%)	
II. Beginning of public ministry				
3:1-4:11 (3%)	1:1-13 (2%)	3:1-4:14 (5%)	1:19-4:54 (16%)	
III. Galilean ministry				
4:12-18:35 (51%)	1:14-9:50 (53%)	4:14-9:56 (24%)	4:46-7:9 (15%)	
A. Phase One: To the Choosing of the Twelve				
4:12-12:21	1:15-3:19a	4:14-7:50	4:46-5:47	
B. Phase Two: To the Withdrawals from Galilee				
12:22-14:12	3:19b-6:29	8:1-9:9	-	
C. Phase Three: To the Departure to Jerusalem				
14:13-18:35	6:30-9:50	9:10-56	6:1-7:9	
IV. Later Judean-Perean ministry				
19:1-20:34 (6%)	10:1-52 (8%)	9:57-19:28 (35%)	7:10-11:54 (28%)	

³The terms 'literary context' and 'literary setting' are used interchangeably.

⁴Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, *A Study Manual of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Fort Worth: AlphaGraphics, 1981), 1:36-37. All rights reserved.

⁵Per cent (%) of verses in this section to total verses of the book.

V. Final Week and Crucifixion

21:1-27:66
(34%)

11:1-15:47
(34%)

19:29-23:56
(20%)

11:55-19:42
(33%)

VI. Resurrection appearances and ascension

28:1-20
(2%)

16:1-20
(3%)

24:1-53
(5%)

20:1-21:25
(6%)

Outline:

In internal impact of 4:23-52 on the Sermon is simply to serve as a narrative setting to introduce the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon. Through this material we realize that the Sermon represents the “teaching / preaching” content of Jesus’ ministry in these early stages especially. The emphasis in chapters eight and nine ‘flesh out’ the healing aspect of Jesus’ ministry that is mentioned in the Summary Narrative of 4:23-25. So when we want to know what Jesus’ taught and preached about, the Sermon then defines the phrase “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom” (διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) in 4:23. Thus the Gospel of the Kingdom takes on a distinct meaning with the Sermon defining its boundaries.

Contextual Issues:

One of the major contextual issues present is the possible link of 4:23-25 to Mark’s gospel. Matthew includes a number of Summary Narratives or Summarizing Statements throughout his gospel.⁶ Some of these are almost verbatim copies of Summarizing Narratives or Statements in Mark’s gospel. In trying to connect up the time frame between Mark and Matthew for Jesus’ public ministry, the issue becomes which of Mark’s Summary Narratives most properly links to Mt. 4:23-25? Probably Mark 1:35-39⁷ is in mind, but one cannot be absolutely certain.

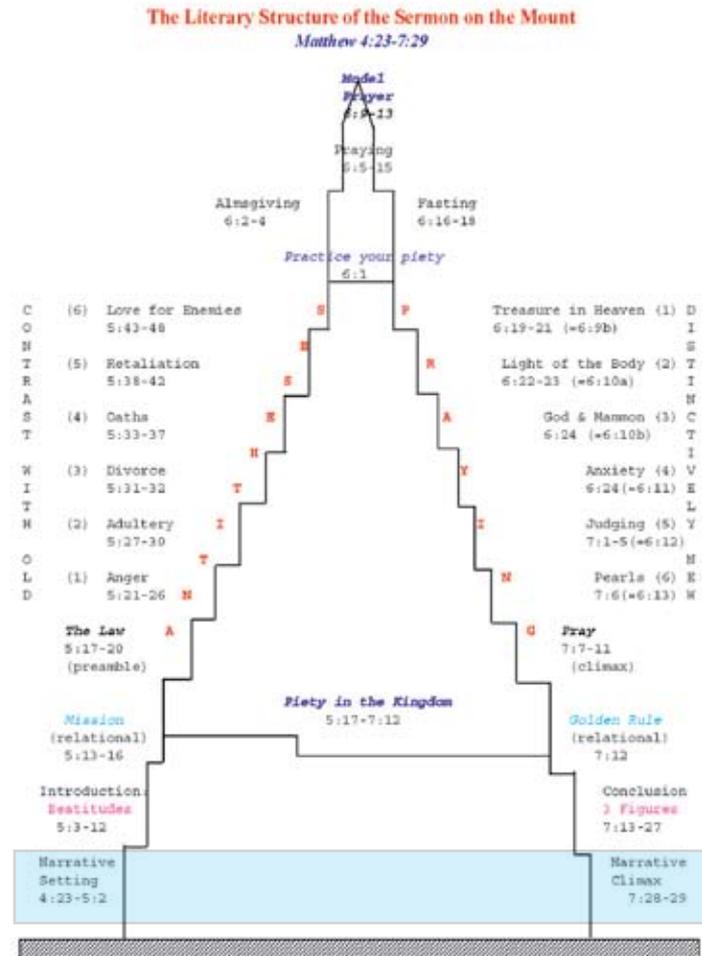
Additionally, the almost verbatim repeating of 1:23⁸ in 9:35⁹ raises the possibility of these two statements being intended to serve as literary ‘book ends’ thus grouping the material between them into a unit of express. The impact of this re-enforces the above conclusion of the ‘preaching/teaching’ activity being

⁶Compare 4:23-25; 8:16–17; 9:35-38; 12:15–16; 14:13–14, 36; 15:29–31; 19:1–2; 21:14

⁷NRSV: 35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” 38 He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

⁸Καὶ περιῆγεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ.

⁹Καὶ περιῆγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν.



Source: Lorin L. Cranford, *Study Manual of the Sermon on the Mount: Greek Text* (Fort Worth: Scripta Publishing Inc., 1988), 320. Adapted from Günter Bornkamm, "Der Aufbau der Pöpredigt," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-78): 419-432.

5:1 And
 having seen the crowds
 F **He went up**
 into the mountain,
 and
 when He had sit down
 G **His disciples came to Him,**
 and
 H **He began teaching them,**
 saying, . . .

In the flow of ideas inside the text the Summary Narrative in 4:23-25 moves from a topic sentence introduction (statement A) to consequence (#B). This leads to responses of the people 1) seeking healing (# C) which Jesus accommodated (statement #D). 2) Large crowds followed Jesus (# E).

The Narrative Setting of the Sermon in 5:1-2 builds off of statement E implying the crowds wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. Statement F indicates His response to seeing the crowd by going up into a mountain. When He was seated in typical Jewish scribal manner, His disciples come close to Him in order to listen to His words (# G). Statement H describes the beginning of the teaching of the Sermon with formal Jewish expression signaling to the readers that important material was being presented.

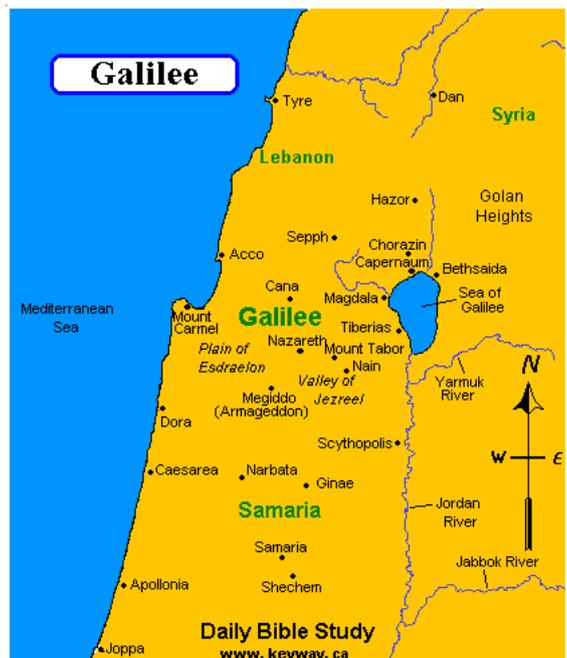
Summary Narrative: 4:23-25.

Jesus' travels through Galilee placed Him in northern Palestine with Samaria and Judea to the south. This was home for Him since He had grown up in Nazareth. The territory was dominantly Jewish at this point, but much less traditionalist than the more conservative Judea where the temple was located. The bulk of Jesus' three year public ministry took place in Galilee. The population density was many times higher here than in Judea, so with less travel He could reach much larger numbers of people. How long this pericope covers in time is not known. Perhaps just a month or so, but maybe longer.

The main point for Matthew is what Jesus was doing. Essentially He was speaking and healing. Hagner (*WBC*) points out that:

The Gospel of Matthew stresses the teaching of Jesus (διδάσκων), and here the evangelist mentions it even before "preaching the good news of the kingdom" (κηρύσσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας). (For this phrase, see also 9:35, 24:14; cf. 26:13; on the kingdom, see 4:17 and esp. 3:2.) The teaching referred to is probably the exposition of Torah, of which Matthew provides an example in chaps. 5-7 (note ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν, "in their synagogues," which may reflect the distancing of Matthew's community from the synagogues). But such teaching is inseparable from the preaching of "the good news of the kingdom." Thus διδάσκων and κηρύσσω here belong together, and no important difference is to be seen between the words (see the excursus in Luz, 1:206-8). (They are also apparently interchangeable in Luke 4:15, 44.) The latter is but the foundation of the former. It is, of course, also the foundation for the healing (θεραπεύων) ministry of Jesus, for the words and deeds of Jesus also belong together. Jesus healed πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ, "every disease and every malady among the people."

Jesus touched the lives of many people with His ministry of healing. To be sure, not everyone with some kind of illness in Galilee was healed by Him, but large numbers were, especially in the beginning of His public ministry.¹¹ Matthew's all encompassing list of sicknesses in verse 24 underscores the complete power of Jesus. Nothing was too strong for Him to be able to overcome in healing.



¹¹For a detailed listing of the individual healings of Jesus along with the Summary Narratives, see my "The Miracles of Jesus: A Chronological Listing," at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/Miracles.htm>. Page 5 of Bergpredigt Study

In verse 25, Matthew stresses the popular response to Jesus during this beginning phase of ministry. Large crowds of people followed Him, coming from all over Palestine. The geographical references include Palestine on the west side of the Jordan River, and include the region east of the Jordan from the Decapolis southward to the “beyond the Jordan” just north of the Dead Sea, the so-called Transjordan region.

Narrative Setting: 5:1-2.

These first two verses set the scene for the presentation of the contents of the Sermon. As such the contain important signals that should guide how that content is understood.

Jesus responded when “**he saw the crowds**” (Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους). The presence of massive numbers of people with many demands for healing prompted Him to seek a location where He could focus on His disciples. In Luke’s Narrative Setting for the Sermon in 6:12-19,¹² He had spent the night on the mountain and came down from a higher elevation to a level place where He encountered these large numbers of people. But in spite of the effort to get away, the crowds of people followed Him to this location as 7:28 makes clear: “**Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching.**”

In both accounts the retreat was to a mountain (εἰς τὸ ὄρος). In the Bible, mountains are important places of discovery of God.¹³ Here the more obvious link by Matthew is to associate Jesus’ **‘giving’** the revelation of God on a mountain, in contrast to Moses going up into the mountain to **‘receive’** the revelation of God. The geographical location of this mountain is not certain. The traditional site of the Mount of Beatitudes on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee is as plausible as any alternative. “Once known as Mt. Eremos, this hill is located between Capernaum and Tabgha and is just above the ‘Cove of the Sower.’”¹⁴



Once on the mountain Jesus sat down and then His disciples came to Him: καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. The wording of Matthew puts primary emphasis on Jesus’ posture with the coming near Him by the disciples highlighting this.¹⁵ Thus Matthew sets the scene of a Jewish scribe / rabbi teaching his disciples -- a scene very common in the ancient world. But this is Jesus given a fresh new interpretation of the Law of God with the authority of a Jewish scribe

who was considered an expert in such matters. Where were the crowds? Although not described directly by Matthew they were in the background and close enough to hear what Jesus said to His disciples.

¹²NRSV: 12 Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. 17 He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

¹³“In two other places Jesus goes up to “the mountain” (14:23, to pray; 15:29, where he “sat down” and healed multitudes). Mountains in Matthew are clearly places where special events occur (4:8, the mountain of temptation; 17:1, the mountain of the transfiguration; 28:16, the mountain of the resurrection appearance and the great commission; see Donaldson). In 8:1 Jesus goes down from the mountain, as he does from the mount of transfiguration in 17:9. The setting of the Olivet discourse in 24:3 is very similar to the present passage: Jesus sits down, his disciples come to him (but κατ’ ἰδίαν, “privately”), and he begins to teach them (24:3). Since Matthew emphasizes mountains in special narratives usually having to do with revelation, τὸ ὄρος, “the mountain,” here functions as a literary device. Matthew may well have in mind the parallel of Moses going up to Mount Sinai to receive the law (Exod 19–20; 34; cf. *Abot* 1:1; *Pirqe R. El.* 46; see too Matt 23:2). Donaldson (111–18) links the mountain with a Zion eschatology background, providing the scene for the Messiah’s renewal of Torah for his eschatological people.” (Hagner, WBC).

¹⁴Source: “Mount of Beatitudes,” Bible Places.com

¹⁵“But this was to be a special time of teaching for his disciples, who “came to him.” προσῆλθαν, a favorite verb of Matthew in this connection, has cultic connotations and itself points to the messianic character of Jesus (see J. R. Edwards). It was customary in Judaism for the rabbi to teach from a seated position. Thus Jesus sat down (καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ) before he began to teach (cf. 13:2; 24:3). Jesus, somewhat like a new Moses, goes up to the mount to mediate the true interpretation of the Torah.” (Hagner, WBC).

Thus Matthew reminds us that the Sermon was directed to the disciples, and not to the crowds of on-lookers, although they were permitted to listen in on what Jesus was teaching the disciples. Luke affirms the same perspective in 6:20, “Then he looked up at his disciples and said:..”. Clearly the Sermon was intended as a discipleship tool. It becomes an evangelistic tool only in a secondary way with the crowds.

The special importance of Jesus’ words in the Sermon is highlighted by the way Matthew describes Jesus beginning to speak the words of the Sermon: ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων, which literally translates as “having opened His mouth, he began teaching them saying...” This somewhat convoluted expression reflects an ancient Jewish thought structure used to stress the special importance of someone’s words.¹⁶

2. What does the text mean to us today?

1) What is the Kingdom (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) that Jesus spoke about in His travels over Galilee? How is it ‘good news’?

2) What purpose did Jesus’ healing of the sick have? Compare the following assessment of R.E.O. White, “Heal, Health,” Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology:

With this background, the prevalence of sickness in the ancient world, it was natural that hearts should hope for a better future, when sorrow and sighing would flee away (Isa 29:17-19; 35:10). There is rabbinic evidence that some were looking for a Messiah who would heal the world’s sickness. The Talmud later preserves among “signs of the Messiah” the portrait of “one in the midst of the suffering poor ... tending their wounds.” This may look back for scriptural warrant to Isaiah’s picture of the Servant of the Lord who would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. That such a hope was current much earlier is shown by Matthew’s quoting these words (in a variant version, 8:17) to “explain” the healing mission of Jesus. For Matthew understands “he took up our infirmities and carried our diseases” to mean, not that Jesus was sick, but that he was concerned about the sick.

Luke shows Jesus announcing in similar terms the arrival of God’s kingdom—“freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (the healing of society, Luke 4:18). And when the Baptist, hearing in prison of Jesus’ ministry, sent someone to ask Jesus if he was indeed the Messiah, Jesus sent back the message, “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised... Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me” (Matt 11:4-6). Christ’s healing ministry was sufficient evidence that the king had come, and that the kingdom of God was gracious and kind, not as John had foretold, a realm of axe and flail, of fire and judgment, but of healing and liberation.

So concern for suffering and the impulse to heal became vital elements in Christianity.

3) Where are significant places in which you have encountered God in your life?

4) What connection between Jesus and Moses is implied in the Narrative Setting of the Sermon? What implications does this have for Christian understanding of the Old Testament?

5) How authoritative are the words of Jesus? In Matthew’s presentation? In your personal life?

¹⁶Cf. ” The phrase ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ, “he opened his mouth,” is a Semitic idiom used at the beginning of a public address (see Black for the OT background; cf. Acts 8:35; 10:34).” (Hagner, WBC).