

Matthew 4:18 - ...and walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew's brother, casting their net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they immediately left the nets and followed Him. 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. And they immediately left the boat and their father and followed Him. Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

In the first part of this chapter, in verse 19, you'll see Him say two things to Peter and his brother Andrew. The first one is what? "Follow me." The second one is, "I'll make you fishers of men." Then He called two more, and He went on. It was not as though He went and began, but He went on proclaiming the kingdom of God. They left their nets, their occupations, and their father, and they followed the Lord Jesus. The Lord said, ultimately, I'll make you fishers of men. I have an impression that the devil just really quaked that day. He probably said, "One's enough." Some months ago - no, it's not been that long ago- I sat on the sofa, and I said to you, "The Lord has got to have a gospel that will still twist this world in knots, that will still convulse communities and get men thrown in jail."

That's the kingdom. Now let me talk about the Lord's love and his bride. God has a passion. He has a real passion. He has a passion to love. I once said God is ultimately after one thing. He is after a "Mrs. God." He is after a wife. To have that wife, He had to become a man, and He gets that wife from fallen mankind, but ultimately, she is a divine wife.

Now then, that's the Lord's bride, but there is also a kingdom. Now, who's the very first citizen in the kingdom of God? Jesus Christ. Why didn't you say, God? Let me tell you why you didn't say it was God: God has the kingdom of heaven. That's everything but Earth, but God cannot claim the earth. He gave that to man. What man? Could you say what man, without saying Jesus Christ, was given a throne upon this earth to claim the earth? David. Now, who is a descendant of David? Jesus Christ. Does Jesus Christ, therefore, as a descendant of the king, have a right to this planet? He does. He won that right. Now, what is his name? Jesus the Christ. He can take the servant's kingdom and call it His own.

So He is the first citizen of the Earth. Now, He is the son of King David. Another one besides God can also claim God's throne. Who is that? The Son of God. Therefore, there is one man who can claim rightful rule over two kingdoms, the kingdom of heaven and the earth. In all of created and uncreated matter, there are only two places, heaven and earth...the heavens and the earth. So here is one who can claim rightful rule over all things, something that not even God can do. Who is the first citizen of the kingdom of God? Jesus Christ can take earth and the kingdom of heaven, marry them together, and make them the kingdom of God and the kingdom of His dear Son.

Okay, does Jesus Christ love? He does love. Whom does He love? Tell me who He loves. Alright, He loves the Father. Praise the Lord. This is going to be a neat family. Does the Father love Him? Yes. Now then, forget that; who else does He love? Just say it. Say me. You say me. He loves Jeff, right? He loves Jack. That presses the point.

But let's say that it is a corporate love. Therefore, whom does He love? His bride. Did Jesus Christ... I think I'd better stop here a moment. Are you children of God? Yes. Careful...are you heirs of God? We are not heirs of God; we're becoming heirs of God. We will be made heirs of the Lord. Now then, was Jesus Christ always heir to the throne of God? Absolutely not. Was He the Son of God or was He made the Son of God? Yes. I'll explain this because men have been condemned as heretics for saying that Jesus Christ became the Son of God.

When Jesus Christ was 12 years old, He was the Son of God, but He had not yet been made the Son of God. The point is... He could have still blown it. When He was 30, He was the Son of God, but He could still blow it. Adam was referred to once as the Son of God, but he blew it. Jesus Christ got up every day with the distinct possibility of blowing it. He went to bed the Son of God, but he couldn't be sure the next day He would be the Son of God.

Now, I might be condemned as a heretic for that, but, brothers, I want you to know that the greatest moment of crisis came in the Garden of Gethsemane, when it became evident that there were two wills in the universe, the will of God and the will of Jesus Christ, and they were not the same way. Now, that is so clear in the Scripture. Jesus Christ could have fallen. Lord, cover me. You say He couldn't have fallen. Then the devil would not have wasted his time tempting Him. Every day, He got up, the Son of God, but He had not run the full race.

When He was 12 years old, He had run the race of 12 years and made it perfect. At 30, He had run the race and made it perfect, but He had not finished the race. At 33, He had run the race, and He was still the Son of God, but He wasn't finished running; you couldn't say that tomorrow He would be the Son of God.

Finally, what happened? He came to the garden, and the maximum moment of danger came. What was the issue? The cross. *The* cross. Who won? God won. Christ lost. The Lord Jesus lost. He lost His own soul. God won. What did he cry out on the cross? *It is finished*. When He rose from the grave, He was declared by God...He was declared *the Son of God*. He was sealed forever. It cannot be taken from Him. Now He is declared the Son of God forever. It's finished. The test is over. The devil would not bother today.

Well, I'm going to tell you one of the most powerful things you've ever heard in your life, but it's going to take you weeks and months to let it sink in. As far as that goes, I'm going to spend a good part of the summer helping this sink in. The message I'm bringing this morning, by the way, may get brought up again this summer. Don't sit there and look at it like it's old hat. It's the newest thing out. How did He become declared? According to Scripture, God declared Him the

Son of God. How did He win that? By obedience unto death.

Now, listen to me. Something new, brothers and sisters. I wish that we could have done all this in an unbroken line, night after night after night, and all of this could have been seen by you so clearly, but we've had big pauses. You thank the Lord for those big pauses, and I'll tell you why. It means that this didn't come out of somebody's book of sermons somewhere. We asked the Lord to do a new thing among us. He's taking His time with it, and these things are not just coming out like pancakes on Sunday mornings.

We started with: how many divine creatures in the universe? One. Who was it? God. Then how many did we end up with? Two. Who's the second one? Man. Now, are there two? The Scripture clearly says there's only one God. God had become a man. Okay, but let's say God and God's Son. That's how far we've gotten, and now we're almost to the book of Acts. We've been getting right up to the book of Acts quite frequently now.

Now tell me, how many divine creatures are there? Three. Who are they? The Father? The Son? You say the Holy Spirit? I'll take that, but I want you to know that Jesus Christ got Himself a fiancée. Now, is she divine? Yes. Is she human? Yes. Still, if she's divine, there are now three divine creatures. Lord, forgive me for this. You know, I can get hung for this. In 200 years from now, they can write books about this blasphemer, you know, this heretic. If you take me real seriously, then we have problems. That there are three gods? No, but I'm only saying that Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, is going to have a bride one day.

Now, you argue with me. You tell me that she is not divine. She has to be a perfect match for Him. If you try to put this in a theological system, I'm a heretic. If you will do what the Scripture does, and that is to present something and walk off and leave it, then I'm no heretic. Scripture presents that Jesus Christ is going to have a bride and doesn't explain it, and praise God; that's all I need to know, and that's all you need to know.

There are three divine creatures in the universe. Now, that's impossible because there's only one God. How will you explain that? Three in one? Still only one God. I'll turn it around. God was in Christ, and Christ is in us. But better: God was in Christ, and out of Christ's rib came His bride. One day, He and His bride will throw the biggest supper in history, and they'll get married...and they will be one. There will still be only one God. So you see, I'm not a heretic.

I want to drop all of that and come back to what I said a moment ago. Jesus Christ was the Son of God. How did He win His sonship? Through obedience unto death. I want to enlarge that. That is exactly the proper answer, but I would nonetheless like to enlarge it. How did Jesus Christ begin to become the Son of God...before that? I think I'll press you. How did Jesus...what was his very first step in beginning to become, to earn, Son of God? The first thing he had to do was to give up his Godship. Do you know how he gained the kingdom of God? By losing the kingdom of heaven. Let me repeat that. This is important.

What was the most glorious kingdom universal history has ever known? The kingdom of the heavens. Is that neater than being president of the United States? Is that neater than being king of England? Is that neater than some wealthy guy in Santa Barbara sitting up in one of those hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean with a couple hundred thousand dollars in the bank? Is it? Well, Jesus Christ gave it up. He gave up His title to the neatest fortune, kingdom, and greatest security in all the universe.

I want to try to explain something to you. He has already experienced everything that will ever be demanded of you. Are you clear? You'd better be impressed by what I'm talking to you about, because I am talking to you about the gospel of the kingdom, and it is a gospel that hasn't been preached in over a millennium.

Jesus Christ gave up security, wealth, and title. He abandoned everything. For what reason? He lost the kingdom of heaven to gain the kingdom of God. What else did He lose? He lost His Godship to gain His bride. He had to become human to have a wife. Jesus Christ turns to a man and says, "Give up everything and follow me," and I don't care what that man gives up; it pales in comparison to what He gave up. The Lord Jesus Christ has no problem demanding everything from anybody, because he has bested us all.

Please get this and get it clear. I am learning not only from the Word of God, but from experience: I can only demand what I have attained. Let me put it this way: not attained, because that's got a little law put in it. I can only demand that which I have experienced. Well, that really frightens me, because that means I'd better experience an awful lot. After all, the Lord would have me demand an awful lot. I hope I can stay on the course here, because I'm going to get off course just a minute.

Let's get this over with now and move into the earthly side of spiritual things. I used to be a minister, but I don't want to talk about myself. I want to talk about us ministers in general. We are God's prophets. We're in charge of the kingdom on this earth. Now, a man stands up in a pulpit. He's standing there in a silk suit with a \$40 pair of shoes on. The sun's shining through a \$10,000 stained-glass window and falls on his face and a \$75,000 organ choir that's robed in \$5,000 worth of fancy garb, and he's speaking in a building that costs \$250,000 to a congregation whose average family income is something like \$7,000 to \$10,000 a year. He's making about \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year, plus a parsonage, and if he belongs to the denomination, he has a retirement plan.

What kind of demands can he make? Middle-class American, typical spiritual American demands. That's all he can demand. When Jesus Christ walked by, what could he demand? Foxes have holes in the ground; birds have nests in the trees...but the greatest thing that ever came out of mankind doesn't have a rock to lay his head on. He had clothes on His back, and nothing in His hands. They were bare. He hadn't... Maybe I'd better stop right there and go back, and I want to make sure I'm getting all my point in here.

The Lord loves you. By the way, the Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. The Lord Jesus loves you. He came to earth looking for a bride. He didn't have one, but he would do anything to get her, because love needed a place to go. Jesus Christ was a divine creature. He was a new species. He was both man, all man, and he was God, all God. He was all God and all man, and nobody had ever been that before, not even God. He was looking for a wife. He was also the Son of God, rightful heir to earth and rightful heir to the kingdom of the heavens.

While He was looking for a bride, He was also winning His sonship so that He might rule heaven and earth...and He won obedience. He won his sonship by obedience. The first step in that obedience was losing all things. The loss of all things. Gee whiz, I'm just standing here speaking, and I'm just... I'm getting under conviction. I really am. Man, I just suddenly realized what I've got—*the loss of all things*. I held my hands up there a minute ago, and I said they were empty. I realized mine wasn't. I've got a wedding band on mine. I don't mean that I'm going to give up marriage, but I didn't realize until just a minute ago that I own gold.

Simon Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none." Praise the Lord. You know, brothers and sisters, I was thinking about that while driving up to the meeting this morning. This is really on my heart, and I was driving along here. I've been thinking about all the things that have been said about what I've been speaking lately. Oh, not much has been said; I don't want to over-dramatize this. Only a few people even know I've said it. You know, a few people have said this is a little extreme.

I was driving along, and I was thinking, what's the gospel of the kingdom going to do when it's preached all over the earth, or even around in middle-class America? This is what I realized: there are going to be people who will find Scripture to prove that this is not necessary, that this is not important, that we can go on with the Lord without it, and they will quote some verses, and then they will rationalize, and they'll say how foolish this is, and when they get through, I'm not going to be in the world, and they're going to be in the world. They may be scripturally correct, and I may be scripturally wrong, but when the conversation's over, they'll be in the world, and I won't.

Do you understand what I mean? That Christianity will continue on its fat, sloppy, rich course, men earning money, giving their time to the accumulation of wealth, and so forth, and so forth. They will have all the Scripture, and they will have absolutely proven beyond doubt that I'm wrong, and they're going to be in the world, and I'm going to be in the kingdom of God. So, I'm sorry, I can take that...I can say, well, we must pay attention to the things we have. I've got a safer way—not to have any things. You know, there's been moral issues going around here for years about big automobiles and little automobiles and high incomes and little incomes. Well, I've got a perfect solution. I just don't have anything. I'm warming up to this idea. I'm trying it on for size.

I am impressed that Jesus Christ left everything. He came up to Simon Peter, and He looked at

him, and said, “Simon Peter, leave everything and come follow me.” Point one, point two in just a moment. Did Simon Peter leave everything? He left everything. We’ll prove that in a minute, very simply; I’ve already mentioned it. He left everything. He didn’t have anything. Did Simon Peter leave everything? Yes or no? Everything? Well, he kept his wife. There’s one. He kept his wife. He left everything to follow the Lord Jesus.

Now, if I can pursue this a little further, what can a middle-class minister standing in the stained-glass church demand? He can demand whatever he is; no more and no less. Simon Peter left everything. What did the Lord Jesus leave? He left everything. The incredible thing is that, to have a wife, He also had to leave the earth, at least physically...He had to leave the earth physically...so that He could enter man, so that man would also be divine, because there’s only one divine God, and He had to enter mankind, that mankind might be his bride, that He might have her to marry, that they might be one, even as he is one.

Now I’m up to the day of Pentecost, and that’s where I was trying to be three or four months—no, a month and a half ago. You remember we went through all the Gospels, and we talked about the Lord Jesus coming to love. You remember Mary Magdalene and how she loved the Lord, and she was such a prototype of the church. I want to ask you a question. Did Mary Magdalene leave everything? Are you absolutely certain she left everything? Can you prove to me that Mary Magdalene left everything? Okay, because she did something before she went everywhere he went.

I want you to know something. Mary Magdalene won the right to enter the kingdom of God. Mary Magdalene had been a harlot, and she had accumulated great wealth from it, and what had she invested it in? It was an investable commodity in those days. Today, people invest in stocks, but in Europe, they invest in paintings. In those days, men and women invested in precious ointments. She invested in ointments worth a great deal, and she heard Jesus Christ say, “Leave everything and follow me,” and He had saved her from her sins. She had wealth, and she didn’t give it to the poor, although the Lord had probably told her, “Give it to the poor,” because that’s what He told the wealthy man: give it to the poor.

What did she do? She decided she’d throw it away; totally waste it. She didn’t want anything. Where did she decide to waste her wealth? On the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah. I had another scripture to read. I’m not going to read it. I’m going to tell it. Did Simon Peter leave everything? You can only demand what you’ve experienced. Brothers, you can only demand what you’ve experienced.

Jesus Christ told Simon Peter, "Give up everything, and I'll make you a fisher of men," and he won the right to fish for men. Did He ever fish for men? You bet your life He did. When did He fish for men? On the day of Pentecost. He said, “Leave this crooked and perverse generation.” He preached the gospel of salvation that day, and how many believed? Three thousand. I’m not sure, though, that was the day He won his fisherman's license. Well, He won them on the day He

followed the Lord, but let me tell you the day He put it into practice. He won it....He put it into practice...not on the day of Pentecost, which was Sunday, but on Monday. What did Simon Peter say to 3,000 people on Monday morning? He said, " Most of you folks don't live here. You ought to stay here.

That's in the Bible, so that's no big deal. Anything in the Bible, anybody can do. Well, I'm not kidding, you know, as long as it's in the Bible, you know, anybody can do it. Well, let's take it out of the Bible. Just how much audacity does it take for a man to stand up in front of 3,000 rich Jews and tell them to give up everything they've got? Try that on for size someday. I believe you'll get further that way than you ever will any other way with a bunch of Jews, because you'll hit them at their weakest spot...or Gentiles.

I mean, He told them to abandon everything and stay in Jerusalem. I want you to know that, in the next few days, an incredible amount of money was laid at Simon Peter's feet. Can you believe that? Thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars were laid at his feet. Is that true or not? Maybe millions; I don't know, but at least money. How much of it belonged to Simon Peter? How much of it belonged to the people who gave it? Who owned that money? I have no idea; all I know is... nobody claimed it.

Simon Peter said a short time later, "Silver and gold have I none." He was a flat-broke apostle. You know something else? All apostles ought to be flat broke. We'll put that down in our book as a law. All apostles ought to be now and forever flat-busted. We'll make that a rule, brothers. Apostles got no business having anything. Now, it's all right if everybody else does as long as the apostles don't, but if an apostle will give up everything to follow the Lord, then he can demand what he's experienced.

I haven't even gotten close to my point. I haven't even gotten remotely close to my point. You'll be amazed at my point.

Who gave up everything? The Lord Jesus. Then He turned around to a man, and what did He demand of Him? Everything. Did the man respond? Then what did he do? He gave up everything. Is that the gospel of the kingdom? Praise God. That's part of it.

Okay, please look at Simon Peter. Here he is. Here's his net. There's the Lord. He's here. His net is on his... may I call that my left? On his left, and the Lord is over here on his right. Simon Peter picks up his net, casts it into the sea, and pulls in some fish. It's a good day's haul. If I keep this up for 20 or 30 or 40 or 50 years, I'll be a lower-middle-class fisherman; get out of this upper-lower-class fisherman business.

He's heard John the Baptist, and He went along with John the Baptist. John the Baptist was canned the religious system...and he's still out there pulling fish. He becomes conscious someone's over there, and he sees the Lord Jesus. Wow. Gee, I want to hear him again

sometime. Now, there is quite a guy. I didn't know he was around here. Boy, wow, what a privilege. That was just so wonderful. Man, I wonder if someday I might even get close enough to talk to Him. Boy, wow. What's he doing coming over this way? Gee, goodness, I believe he's coming this way. Andrew? Andrew?

The Lord starts by coming near, but He doesn't just come real near. He keeps going, then stops and says, "Simon Peter, follow me."

"You mean...follow you?"

"Follow me. I'll make you fishers of men." The Lord on his right, commercial business on his left; the Lord, or smelly old fish. Okay, brothers, that's the gospel of the kingdom. Here's the first half of it. He threw his net to the fish. That's the first half. He left everything, and then he turned around, and having lost everything, what did he gain?

Listen very carefully: he gained the greatest honor ever gained by man. He gained the privilege of living with Jesus Christ for three years. He didn't get to shake His hand or to hear Him speak; he got to know Him as only twelve men in history have ever known Him.

That's the gospel of the kingdom.

I hope everyone here has been able to clearly follow what we've been doing lately. If not, then get clear right now. We did not sell all and start living commonly. Brothers and sisters, we're seeking to do something that hasn't been done in quite some time as a group of people. What's the first thing we're seeking to do? The first thing is to give up everything. Well, a people just plain haven't done that. *A people just plain haven't done that.*

I know I called you to do something that was not necessary. I called you to give up everything and start living more or less commonly together. The word came from some of the brothers, but it's not necessary. It wasn't necessary for Simon Peter to give up the commercial fishing business either. He could have gone on with the Lord, but they would have always been the two. If you don't believe that, you keep holding on to something. I don't care what it is. I confess to you there is one thing I am still holding on to, and as long as I do, it's going to be a hindrance.

Let me give you an illustration out of the life of Gene Edwards. The Lord willing, I haven't been stripped of things yet. I'm going to stand and demand based on experience. If you think I've been hard to get along with up till now, you ain't seen nothing yet, but I've got something. I want to show you its power. I'm trying to make a point, and this is not something I would ever even suggest anybody else do, but I'm not everybody else. I'm nobody, but I'm somebody.

I'm a teacher, and every month, those cotton pickers take \$90 out of my salary. It's state law. There's nothing I can do about it. I was given no choice. They take \$90 out of my salary every month. It's more than that. I think it's \$98. I don't know exactly how much. They do that 10

months a year. They take \$1,000 out of my income every year, and they put it somewhere up in Sacramento. You know what it's for, don't you? It's for when I retire.

Now listen, I've never had a retirement fund before. Let me tell you something else. My blood doesn't circulate beyond here. It circulates all the way down to here, and it doesn't circulate from there down. From here down, I'm 32 degrees day and night. You don't know what it's like to walk around your whole life in two buckets of ice water.

The only time I ever even get remotely warm is in Texas or Memphis in the middle of August, when you open the car doors, and the car's been sealed up for about six hours out in the parking lot somewhere, and the temperature inside is about 130. And I get in and close the doors, and I feel warm. I mean, I'm an ice man 24 hours a day. I'm freezing cold. The problem is when I get in hot weather. Oh, I forget it; there's a reason why I'm so cold: my blood just won't move.

Well, let me tell you what having a retirement fund does to me. I can't help it. You tell me that this is sinful, immoral, and worldly. I can't help it. I'm cold. I go to work some mornings, and I get down there, and I do exercise, and I rub my hands, and I massage my legs, and I take my shoes off, anything to get warm, and I'm sitting there thinking, boy, when I get old, this is really gonna be bad. The older I get, the worse it gets. It's just plain painful. When I get old, I'm gonna move to southern Florida, and I'm gonna rent me out a little house there, and I might die of bursitis, but I'm gonna die warm. And there I am. I got visions of me on a rocking chair out in the Florida Keys, warm for the first time in my life, too old to move around.

(continued in Part 2)