

### The Lord Begins His Great Galilean Ministry

Luke 4:14-30

*Luke 4: 14-30: Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. 15 And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'" 24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." 28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. 30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.*

#### Background Notes

The first section of Luke 4 gives the account of the temptations of Christ in the Judean wilderness. At the end of that intense time of testing, verse 13 says, "when the devil had ended all the temptations [tests], he departed from Him until an opportune time." Between verses 13 and 14 there is a gap of about a year. During this time our Lord was ministering in Jerusalem and Judea. This early Judean ministry is covered only in the early chapters of John's Gospel.

In Luke 4:14, the Lord's great Galilean ministry begins. The Lord returned to Nazareth, where He had spent His boyhood. He visited the synagogue on the Sabbath – and by the way, archaeologists have now discovered the location of the 1st century synagogue in Nazareth. The people remembered Jesus as "Joseph's son." Maybe some of them had even hired Joseph and his teenaged son, Jesus, to do some work around their homes. After all, they were skilled carpenters or stonemasons, and they did good work! But now Jesus was a man, and He stood up to read the Scriptures in the

synagogue at Nazareth. In that day, the custom was that the man who was the reader for the day would stand up to read the sacred Scriptures.

The Lord took the scroll of Isaiah when it was handed to Him, and He read from the passage that we know today as Isaiah 61:1-2. There are two significant points to be made about the Lord's reading of this portion of Scripture:

1) The Lord stopped the reading in mid-sentence of verse 2. If you look at Isaiah 61:2, you will see that it says *"to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God."* The Lord only read the first part of the verse: *"to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."* Under Doctrinal Point #1, we will discuss why the Lord did not read the second half of the verse: *"...and the day of vengeance of our God."*

2) The Lord sat down after He finished reading. In that culture, when the reader sat down, that meant he was ready to teach about that portion of Scripture. That is why all eyes in the synagogue were fixed upon Jesus. They were waiting expectantly for His teaching -- but they certainly did not expect what the Lord was about to say!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Most believers do not know Scripture the way Jesus did.

In the first part of this chapter we saw that the Lord knew the book of Deuteronomy thoroughly. He quoted three times from Deuteronomy as He refuted Satan's twisting of God's Word, and resisted the three temptations of Satan. So let me ask you once again, how many of us could quote from the book of Deuteronomy by memory?!

The Lord knew the book of Deuteronomy because He **studied** the book of Deuteronomy. Remember, as true Man, the Lord **increased in wisdom** as well as in stature as He grew from boyhood to manhood. Luke 2:52, *"He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."* The Bible was not automatically "programmed" into the mind of Jesus. Jesus came to know the Bible the old fashioned way -- **He learned it!**

After long and hard days of working as a carpenter, the Lord would have gone to the synagogue and literally burned the midnight oil, reading and studying the scrolls of Scripture. Maybe He studied early in the morning as well. Remember, in those days people did not have their personal copies of the Bible. You had to go to the synagogue when classes were held, and you had to make arrangements for using the scrolls in "off" hours. It was extra work to read and study Scripture.

When the scroll of Isaiah was handed to the Lord, He unrolled it right to the place that we know today as Isaiah 61:1-2. (Remember, there were no chapter and verse divisions in the Bibles of those days.) The fact that He unrolled the scroll to exactly the spot He planned to read shows that the Lord had studied Isaiah. He knew the book of Isaiah thoroughly. Believers today certainly do not know Scripture the way Jesus did!

The Lord stopped His quotation from Isaiah 61 in the middle of verse 2, because of what He said in verse 21: *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* The time of Jesus’ earthly ministry was indeed *“the favorable year of the Lord”* (v2a) - - but *“the day of vengeance of our God”* (v2b) is still in the future. The *“day of vengeance of our God”* awaits the second coming of Christ when He returns in judgment.

This is an example of the Lord *“rightly dividing the Word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). If you don’t study Scripture, you can’t “rightly divide” Scripture. You can’t use Scripture properly and appropriately if you don’t know it! Most believers don’t know Scripture the way Jesus did.

## **2. Most unbelievers do not like God when they understand what Jesus said.**

In verses 23-30, everyone in the synagogue loved it when Jesus read the Scriptures. However, when the Lord began to teach on that Isaiah passage, and when He claimed that He was the Messiah and the Son of God, they certainly did not like what Jesus said! They were happy to hear “the carpenter’s son” read the Scriptures in the synagogue, but they were not so happy when He began to teach. The Lord anticipated their rejection when He said, *“No prophet is welcomed in his home town,”* and when He predicted that they would say in the future, *“Physician, heal yourself.”* The people of Nazareth were only interested in seeing Jesus do miracles. They weren’t interested in hearing His message.

Furthermore, when the Lord used two biblical examples in which God’s grace went out to Gentiles rather than Jews, the people of Nazareth did not like what Jesus was saying! The fact that Elijah went to stay with a Gentile widow, not a Jewish widow, and the fact that Elisha was used to heal an enemy Gentile leper, not a Jewish leper -- this was truth that the self-righteous Jews of Nazareth did not want to hear. As far as the Jews of that day were concerned, women (especially widows) and Gentiles and lepers were at the bottom of the social ladder. The Lord’s implication was that if they rejected what Jesus said, God and His grace would turn away and be extended to the Gentiles.

This teaching so infuriated the religious people of Nazareth that they not only put Jesus out of their synagogue -- they cast Him out of their city. They even tried to throw Him over a cliff, but the Lord miraculously walked away through the frenzied crowd!

When unbelievers today realize what Jesus really claims, they react the same way. As long as He’s just “the good carpenter from Nazareth,” they say nice things about Him and about God. But when they understand His claim to be the one and only Son of God, and that He is the only way of salvation, and that those who reject His truth are going to hell, they are infuriated and filled with rage. Most unbelievers do not like God when they really understand what Jesus said.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Don't worry -- Jesus may be rejected but He'll never be removed.

The Lord allowed Himself to be rejected by the people of Nazareth -- but they could not get rid of Him! When they tried to kill Him, He simply passed through their midst and went on His way.

In the same way, the Lord allows Himself to be rejected by people today. He does not manipulate people. But rejecters cannot get rid of Jesus, even though they try their hardest to remove Him. You don't have to worry when your colleagues at work or your neighbors or your fellow students reject your testimony about Jesus Christ - because **they cannot get rid of Jesus and the truth!** Don't worry, Jesus may be rejected - but He'll never be removed!

### 2. Invite a guest speaker if you want a bigger crowd!

In verse 24, the Lord Jesus said, *"No prophet is accepted in his own country or home town."* On another occasion, the Lord said something very similar. Matthew 13:57 - *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."*

This is a general truth, so why not take advantage of this truth? Many examples could be given. For example, when you're planning special services at your church, or when you're trying to get people to come to a special church seminar or outreach, invite a guest speaker for bigger crowd! As the Lord said, no teacher is honored in his own hometown! It's an expression of truth. Don't fight it -- go with it! If you want a bigger crowd, invite a guest speaker for your function!

Here's an illustration. Right now I'm teaching the book of Revelation at a local church. The teaching sessions are advertised and a lot of people know about them -- but I'm a local guy, so we don't get a big crowd. There's always a nice handful of people, but never a big crowd. (Yes, I know exactly what you're thinking at this point -- "No wonder, Dave -- that's because **you're** the teacher! True!) However, I can almost guarantee that if I were to be invited to do a series on Revelation as a guest speaker in a church across the country, we would have a bigger crowd (at least on the first night)!

Now don't get me wrong -- bringing in a crowd is certainly not the most important factor in ministry and in teaching the Word, so you definitely don't want to make numbers your most important reason for a guest speaker! And you don't want to invite just **any** guest speaker, either. But this truth is very practical. If you want a bigger crowd, invite a guest speaker!