

Jesus' Teaching in Nazareth

 Luke 4:14-30

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Last time we completed the introduction to Jesus' ministry in Luke 4:1-13. By way of review, in Luke 4:1, Jesus had just withdrawn from His baptism and the note is made that He was full of the Holy Spirit. This is to emphasize that what takes place next took place by Jesus' dependence upon the Spirit and not His divine nature. Further, verse 1 notes that the Spirit was leading Him around in the wilderness, just as Shechinah Glory had been leading Israel around in a wilderness. In verse 2, this went on for forty days, just as Israel had wandered around for forty years, a clear parallel indicating that where Israel failed Jesus succeeded. During the entire forty days Jesus was being tempted by the devil, to cause Him to sin so that He would fall short of His Messianic goal of dying for our sin. During the forty days He ate nothing. And when the days came to an end He was extremely hungry and verse 3 says the devil took this as an opportunity to tempt Him. The three temptations are with regard to the three avenues of temptation described in 1 John 2:16 as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. The first temptation in verse 3 is through the avenue of the lust of the flesh. The devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God," and this is a first class condition, he doesn't doubt that He is the Son of God, he knows that He is. We might translate "since." "Since you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." In other words, create food for yourself, act in independence of God, don't trust your Father for your earthly needs, trust yourself. This is what the devil wanted Jesus to do, to act independently of God. But Jesus knew the Scriptures and in verse 4 answered, "Man shall not live on bread alone." This passage is from Deut 8, the period of wilderness wanderings, when God provided manna for the Israelites, signifying that they did not depend for their livelihood on manna alone, but on the God who gave the manna. So he must depend upon Him for providing food, not on Himself. And therefore, by means of the word of God used under the filling of the Spirit, Jesus defeated the first temptation, an attempt to get Him to give in to the lust of the flesh. In verse 5 the second temptation is the devil tempting Him through the avenue of the lust of the flesh. For this the devil took Him up, probably in vision, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. In verse 6 he said to Him, "I will give you all" of these kingdoms and all of the glory that comes with ruling them, because they've been handed over to me by Adam and I have the right to give them to whomever I wish. All you have to do, in verse 7, is worship me, just defect from God and you can have all the kingdoms and glory, things that Jesus was ultimately destined to receive, but the temptation here is to receive them all without having to go to the cross. But Jesus

knew the Scriptures and so in verse 8 He answered, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." This passage is Deut 6 where blessing is conditioned on obedience to God. To worship the devil would be disobedience to the first and greatest commandment. He could not expect to receive blessing by disobeying God. So He rejected worshipping the devil. In verse 9 the devil tempted Him a third time, this time through the avenue of the boastful pride of life. For this he took Him to Jerusalem to the highest point of the temple and challenged Him to demonstrate that He was the Son of God by throwing Himself down. This time the devil even quotes Scripture in verse 10 and 11, quoting Ps 91 to the effect that God would send His angels to gently capture Jesus and lower Him to the ground in safety in the presence of all Israel. This would give Jesus instant fame and acceptance as the Messiah. The temptation was for instant recognition and greatness. But Jesus knew the Scripture and in verse 12 quoted Deut 6 again, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." In this passage the Israelites had put the Lord to the test by grumbling about water, doubting whether He was truly with them and cared for them. Jesus did not doubt like Israel. He knew God was with Him and cared for Him. There was no reason to test Him by leaping off a tall building. So, in verse 13, the devil had finished all the temptations for that forty day time period and so he left Him at this time until some other time.

The point of this passage is to establish several things before Jesus embarks on His ministry. First, it is to establish that Jesus was a true human who would have to defeat temptation in the same way that we have to defeat temptation, by dependence upon the Holy Spirit in connection with the proper use of the word of God. At each temptation, this is how Jesus met the challenge and at each of our temptations, this is how we must meet the challenge. Hebrews 4:15 explains it this way, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all thing as we are, yet without sin." Thus, all we must do is what He did, "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." If it worked for Jesus, it will work for us too.

By Luke 4:13 we come to the end of the first section of this Gospel, so let's review the outline before we move to the second section. The first section is Luke 1:1-4:13, where the Son of Man is introduced. Here we learn how the births of the John the Baptist and the Son of Man are both compared and contrasted. And how John was great but Jesus was greater. John was the forerunner who paved the way but Jesus was the Messiah who made the way. He is the Son of God, tempted in all things as we but without sin. The second section is Luke 4:14-9:50, where the Son of Man Ministers in the Galilee. There is a geographical movement of the Gospel of Luke that continues in the Book of Acts. This geographical movement is noted in 4:14 where we read that "Jesus returned to Galilee." Bock said, "...the summary serves as an introduction to a geographical shift that is significant in Luke's structuring of the Gospel."¹ The section of 4:14-9:50 describes Jesus' ministry in the Galilee. It does not cover the earlier part of Jesus' ministry in Judea that is described in the Gospel of John. Therefore, there is a break in Luke's gospel of about one year between Jesus' temptations in 4:13 and Jesus' ministry in the Galilee in 4:14. This section is difficult to outline, but the basic theological question is, "Who is Jesus?" The question is raised because who can teach with such authority and who can do such works of power? Throughout the

disciples become convinced that He is the Messiah but they still have much to learn. One of the prevailing thoughts in this section is that even though someone comes to faith, they still have much to learn. The third section is Luke 9:51-19:28, where the Son of Man Travels to Jerusalem. This is a long section known as the Travelogue because it appears that all that is taught during this section was taught on the road from the Galilee to Jerusalem. There is a lot of teaching in this section, including 22 parables, thus further emphasizing the teaching ministry of Jesus. The fourth and last section is Luke 19:29-24:53, where the Son of Man is Rejected, Crucified and Resurrected. This is in line with the other Synoptic gospels. At the end the nation Israel has rejected Him and now the gospel is to go out to Gentiles.

So, tonight we begin our study of the second section, the Ministry of the Son of Man in the Galilee in 4:14-9:50. Verses 14-15 are transition verses that summarize the first year of ministry in the Galilee.

Starting in verse 14, **And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.** If you look at your map, you can see that **Galilee** was the region in the north around the sea of **Galilee**. He was returning from Judea, the region to the south where He had been baptized by John at the Jordan, the Spirit had descended upon Him to empower Him for His ministry, the Father had pronounced Him to be the Son of God and the Spirit had led Him into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil. Now that He had been approved by heaven and passed the supreme test of temptation, His ministry had begun. He ministers in Judea for some time, but then **returned to the Galilee**.

And note is made that when He came into **the Galilee** He was **in the power of the Spirit**. In other words, Jesus would minister **in the power of the Spirit** and not in His own power. He would live a life of dependence and thereby provide the example for us to live. And apparently this ministry was effective because we are told that **news about Him spread through all the surrounding district**. The word **news** is from the Greek word *φημη*, from which we get the word "fame." Jesus' fame **spread** around the whole area. Bock said, "this is the first of several notes about how people initially responded to Jesus (4:22, 28, 32, 36-37)."² And this initial response indicates that He was gaining in popularity. Constable said, "This was the initial popular response to Him, and it is the normal initial response that Spirit-directed believers experience."³ Whenever somebody is new, there is a lot of interest because of the newness of the person, but after awhile that interest usually wears off.

In verse 15, **And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.** The verb translated **began teaching** is the imperfect form of the verb *διδασκω*, "to teach." The imperfect tense refers to ongoing action in the past. So it refers to a period of time that Jesus went around teaching in various synagogues throughout the Galilee. He probably went to places like Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, etc...and He was gaining notoriety. He became a popular Bible teacher. The text says He **was praised by all**. The word translated **praised** is the Greek word *δοξαζομενος* and means "being glorified." It is a word that is usually reserved for God, but here used by Luke of Jesus.

Now it's important to note a few things about the origin and development of the **synagogue** and its order of service, since we see here Jesus went around the Galilee **teaching in their synagogues** and in the next verses we're going to see a sample of Jesus' teaching in the **synagogue** at Nazareth. Actually, there is quite a bit of disagreement on the origin and development of the synagogue. Most think it originated sometime during the Babylonian exile because the Temple was destroyed and Jews needed a place to meet, and so the synagogue served as a sort of replacement for the Temple, and that it remained a part of Jewish life when the Temple was rebuilt at the time of Zerubbabel. The Talmud reports a tradition that the synagogues built in Babylon were built with stones taken from the Solomonic Temple and carried to Babylon by the exiles. However, Avi-Yonah and Baras doubt this tradition, stating, "This view has been repeated in various forms even by modern scholars, but there is in fact no support for it in the historical sources. There is no more proof of the existence of a synagogue or of an institution resembling a synagogue or of a framework for public religious worship during the days of the Babylonian exile than there is for the existence of a synagogue or an institution similar to a synagogue in the early stages of the Second Temple."⁴ Rather, they suggest, the synagogue originated in the time of Ezra described in Nehemiah 8. On the occasion Ezra gathered the people as one man for public Torah reading. His posture while reading Torah was standing and there was public prayer as well. Further, there were translators present to convey the sense to the audience, as well as some explanation or commentary. The reading of Torah, prayer, translators and commentary became the basic components of a synagogue meeting.

But the actual development of the synagogue meeting itself did not take place until much later. Avi-Yonah and Baras explain, "From these assemblies, convoked from time to time by Ezra for specific purposes, the synagogue developed—an institution to gather the community together for Torah reading and prayer. Originally, these gatherings were limited to Sabbaths and Festivals; later they were extended to weekdays. If our assumption is correct, then the beginning of the synagogue is to be sought neither in the Babylonian Exile nor in the Diaspora during the course of the Second Temple but rather in Jerusalem within the courtyards of the Temple."⁵ As far as their importance, Fruchtenbaum wrote, "Eventually, these houses of study became the center of all religious and communal life in Israel." In other words, the synagogue eventually eclipsed the Temple in importance. This explains why Jesus began His ministry in the synagogues of the Galilee rather than the Temple in Jerusalem. The synagogue was the center of all of Israel's religious and communal life. Men, women and children all came to the synagogue daily, and as often as three times a day. Because it was the center of the community, they eventually integrated schools and courts of law as well as provided shelter for travelers. The full-orbed character of the synagogue is reflected by the Hebrew word for synagogue, *Beth-Keneset*, which means "The House of the Community." It also became such an important place of prayer, that one considered himself drawing nearer to God at the synagogue than at the Temple itself. And, of course, so important was synagogue that it changed the very character of the Sabbath. Sabbath was to be a day of rest where you spent time at home. But the Sabbath became a place of gathering for public corporate worship.

As far as the order of service, the reading of Torah took precedence in the first part of the service. At least seven men would read no less than three verses. The section to be read in the land of Israel was already decided by a three year cycle of readings, so that Torah was read over the course of three years. However, readings were not tied to a specific time of year because there were special Sabbaths and Feasts that intervened. So the cycle actually varied between three and a half to four years. As the men read the Torah, if a translator was present, he would not read more than one verse at a time so as to give the translator time to translate. Prayers were usually interspersed in the readings. This constituted the first part of the service. The second part of the service began with a reading from the Prophets. Usually the seventh man to read the Torah was the same man who would read from the Prophets. He would read no less than twenty-one verses. This is the portion we see Jesus reading in the following passage. This means that He probably read the last three verses from Torah and then was handed a scroll from the Prophets. The section read was left to the discretion of the reader, so Jesus selected this passage. After reading it He intended to give an explanation, which was quite normal. Scott said, "The readings were accompanied by a targum, a translation-interpretation which included both a free rendering of the text into another language and a brief explanation of it. In the land of Israel the interpretation was in Aramaic, elsewhere in the vernacular, for example, Greek. The Torah was interpreted verse by verse, the Prophets in larger units." Edersheim summarizes, "Alike the seasons and the time of public services, their order, the prayers to be offered, and the portions of the law to be read were fixed. On the other hand, between the eighteen "benedictions" said on ordinary days, and the seven repeated on the Sabbaths, free prayer might be inserted; the selection from the prophets...seems to have been originally left to individual choice; while the determination who was to read, or to conduct the prayers, or to address the people, was in the hands of the "rulers of the synagogue" (Acts 13:15)."⁶

Now that we have some perspective on the origin and development of the synagogue and its order of service at the time of Christ, we turn to Luke 4:16. By this time Jesus had gained fame for both His miracles and teaching throughout the Galilee. Now He came to His hometown where we see an example of Jesus' teaching and the prevailing response. **And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.** The phrase **had been brought up** is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense refers to a past completed action with ongoing results. It would convey that the people at this synagogue knew Him, that they had seen Him grow up since He was just a little boy running around the streets of Nazareth. Since then He had gone away for awhile and become famous. And now He has returned home. Then it says, **as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.** Note that **it was His custom.** Jesus had attended **synagogue** all His life. This was the custom throughout Israel. As I mentioned before, the synagogue was the center of Jewish religious and communal life. Gathering on the **Sabbath** was infringing on the original intent of the **Sabbath**, which was to be a day of rest, but apparently it did not violate the spirit of **Sabbath**, or Jesus would not have attended. Now, we're not told everything in the order of service that took place that day, but when the time came Jesus **stood up to read.** In the synagogue service the reader would always stand to read the Scripture and then sit to give commentary.

And in verse 17, **the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him.** From verse 21 we gather that the attendant or ruler of the synagogue is the one who handed him this book. **And then Jesus opened the book.** The word **book** is *βιβλιον*, from which we get the word Bible. This word basically means "a scroll." They didn't have bound books as we do today, called codices, but they had long scrolls of vellum or parchment. Each scroll of the Hebrew OT was an individual scroll except some of the shorter scrolls such as the minor prophets, which were combined so they would not be lost. In any case, Isaiah was a large scroll and the attendant handed Him the scroll **of the prophet Isaiah.** When it was handed to Him it was still rolled up, so no particular passage was chosen, Jesus would be able to choose what passage was read. At this time **He opened the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, 19To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."** What He would have done is had a large surface to roll out the scroll so He could find this place. There were no chapter and verse divisions, so to find a particular place would mean a little time would be required, but Jesus, knowing the Scriptures of Isaiah could read a portion and know whether the portion He was looking for was before or after that section and then move in the proper direction quickly. Today we have the advantage of having had a couple of men in church history add chapter and later verse divisions. So we can simply look in our margin and identify where **He opened the scroll** to and what **place He found.** So where does this quote come from? In your margin you should see Isa 61:1-2a. The thought actually continues through verse 3, but Jesus stopped in the middle of verse 2. In other words, He did not finish the reading. In fact, He was supposed to read no less than twenty-one verses, but He only read one and a half verses. And after reading one and a half verses, verse 20 says **He closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.** In other words, He was done reading and He was ready to give an explanation of the reading. And a rabbi would always sit down in order to give explanation or commentary, so that much is normal. And the end of verse 20 tells us that **the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.** And part of the reason their gaze was **fixed upon Him** is that He had deviated from the Jewish tradition of reading twenty-one verses by reading only one and a half verses. So they were all in a state of wonder about what He was doing. And this passage is notable because it was considered by all the rabbis to be Messianic. So in verse 21 the implication is clear, He begins the commentary in verse 21, saying **Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.** In other words, I am the Messiah and I am doing these things now. Interestingly, verses 2b and 3 are also about the Messiah but Jesus did not say He was doing these things now. So, if you turn to Isa 61 you'll see the rest of the passage that He did not read and did not say He fulfilled on that day. In verses 1-2a we read what He said was fulfilled that day, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" and at that point He stopped reading and rolled up the scroll. If He had kept reading He would have said, "And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit

of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." Basically what Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah is that He would come in grace and judgment. One of the difficulties of OT Messianic prophecy is how to interpret these passages. The prophets struggled to interpret these passages because they did not understand how the Messiah could accomplish conflicting things, for example, demonstrating grace and judgment. One possible solution is to say there are two Messiah's, one who will show grace and another who will display judgment. But there is another equally plausible solution if you say there are two sides of one Messiah's ministry, one side will receive grace and the other side will receive judgment. And still there is another equally plausible solution if you say that there are two coming of one Messiah, once in grace and again in judgment. So you can see why it's difficult to interpret the passage. The best explanation of this passage, and why Jesus only quoted the first part, is this last solution. There is only one Messiah, but He comes once to display grace and at some other time He will come again in judgment. But even this solution we don't see clearly till later. It could just as well have all been fulfilled in one coming, as the second interpretation suggested, if Israel responded positively. But, in any case, after the fact we see that Isa 61:1-2a is a prophecy of Messiah's first coming, a coming to display grace, and Isa 61:2b-3 is a prophecy of Messiah's second coming, a coming in judgment. So, this passage is an example of many Messianic prophecies where the two coming of Messiah are blended into one picture with no indication of a gap of time in between. It was only in time that we learn of a gap of time due to Israel's rejection.

Now, I already mentioned at the end of verse 20 that, in part, the **eyes of all** the people **in the synagogue were fixed on Him**, because He didn't read all twenty-one verses that were customarily read. In fact, He only read half of one prophecy. Fruchtenbaum noted, "This disregard for established tradition would have naturally drawn their attention. The entire prophecy would have included verses 1-3, but He could not read the entire prophecy because the remaining verses were not being fulfilled that very day. The second reason all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on Him was because He was getting ready to expound upon what He had read, and the rabbis were curious to see what He was going to say."⁷ Since everybody understood that Isaiah 61 was a Messianic prophecy, they knew that when Jesus said, **Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing**, that He was claiming to be Messiah.

It was the Messiah, who in verse 18 would have **The Spirit of the Lord** descend **upon Him**, a fact which had been fulfilled at His baptism by John. The Spirit of the Lord, on that occasion had **anointed** Him with power for His ministry. In Peter's commentary on this in Acts 10:38, he said, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power." This was predicted by Isaiah 61:1 very appropriately. Edersheim said, "The ancient Synagogue regarded Isa. 61:1, 2, as one of the three passages, in which mention of the Holy Ghost was connected with the promised redemption."⁸ Messiah was inducted into His ministry by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the following things. These may be broken down into four basic things. The Greek grammar uses four infinitives to mark off these four things. Each infinitive begins with the word **to preach...to proclaim...to set free...and to proclaim**. The first one, **to preach the gospel to the poor**. The **gospel** is simply

"good news." The "good news" at this time is that Messiah had come to accomplish everything that follows. He came to **preach this to the poor**. The poor are not poor materially, but they are poor spiritually, that is, they recognize their need. These people are generally poor materially, for they have a heightened sense of need, but they may also be rich materially. The good news was for all but it would be applicable to those who were poor spiritually, who recognized their need, and would respond to Messiah. The second infinitive, **He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind.** The **captives** here could be taken to refer to Jews living in captivity, in the exile outside the land, but there is also a spiritual sense as well, those living in captivity to sin and needing **release**. Only Messiah could provide this **release** from spiritual captivity. And also **recovery of sight to the blind**. The **blind** may be viewed as those who are physically **blind**, but it really has in view spiritual blindness. Only Messiah can help one who is spiritually blind recover spiritual sight. The third infinitive, **To set free those who are oppressed**. The **oppressed** may be viewed as those politically oppressed, but again, it's more likely spiritually oppressed. Only Messiah could **set** them **free** from spiritual oppression. The fourth infinitive is in verse 19, **To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord**. This is an expression of the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee was the year when those enslaved for some reason were set free. There was a Jubilee every seventh year and a Jubilee of Jubilees every fiftieth year. The year of Jubilee looked ultimately to the **year of the Lord**'s Jubilee, which was the beginning of the kingdom. So Isa 61 looks forward to Messiah who would come in grace to establish the ultimate Jubilee.

Now, when Jesus said in verse 21, **Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing**, they knew He was claiming to be the Messiah who could do these things. And in verse 22 we see their response. **And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"** The phrase **all were speaking well of Him** is literally in the Greek, "all were testifying well of Him." They had all seen Him grow up and the consensus was that He was a good man. But could He be the Messiah? The text says they were **wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips**. The word **wondering** leaves the impression that they were trying to figure something out. The Greek word is from θαυμαζω and should be translated "amazed." They were amazed **at the gracious words which were falling from His lips**. This indicates that He spoke more than verse 21 when He gave His explanation. What more He spoke we don't know, but the character of the words was **gracious**. The subject was not "grace," but the manner of His presentation was **gracious**. And they were amazed at how **gracious** His words were, but what were they really? They were a demonstration of Isa 61:1-2a; that He was equipped to preach the gospel, proclaim release, set free the oppressed and proclaim the ultimate year of Jubilee. And therefore, He was the Messiah. He was giving them evidence of His claim by His teaching. But they were not sure He was the Messiah, so **they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"** The use of the Greek word οὐχι translated "not" expects a positive answer. In other words, He is **Joseph's son**. And the sense is that because He was the son of a common man, He could not be the Messiah. In other words, they were rejecting Him. They did not think that the Messiah could come from such a common family that we know. Familiarity had bred contempt. They were also jealous that one from

among them had become famous. And we all know that if someone from our hometown goes off and returns famous they are not well-liked, so it was when Jesus returned to His hometown.

In verse 23 Jesus **said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."** This **proverb**, which is technically, a "parable," is simply the laying down of one truth alongside another to make a point of comparison. He knew what they would ask of Him. If one claimed to be a **Physician**, but he was not able to **heal** himself, it would prove that he really was not a physician. In the same way, they had **heard** that He had **done** many miracles at **Capernaum**. And what they wanted Him to do was do some of those miracles in order to prove that He was really the Messiah. In other words, "If you really are the Messiah, show us your stuff! Do some miracles. Prove it!" Now, if you know your OT you know that the test of a prophet was not if he could do a miracle but if he taught the word of God. And that all that a miracle could do would be confirm and yet it would only confirm if it was connected with sound teaching. So what they really wanted to see was a miracle, but what really proved He was the Messiah was His gracious teaching.

But Jesus knew what was going on and in verse 24 **said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown."** And with this remark, Jesus not only indicates that He is who He claims to be, the Messiah, but He is also a **prophet**. The **prophets** were never welcome in their **hometown** and Jesus was not welcome in His. The people were in a state of rejection and unbelief and they form a small picture of the larger rejection and unbelief that will come from the rest of the nation.

In verse 25 He draws an analogy from a similar time of rejection and unbelief, the time of Elijah, and the consequences of their rejection. **But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.** During the ministry of the prophet Elijah the people of Israel were in a state of rejection and unbelief. As a consequence they were under the discipline of God, there was no rain for **three years and six months**, they faced **famine** throughout **the land**. At the time **there were many widows in Israel** that needed relief, yet God would not give it to them because of their rejection and unbelief. Instead, He sent the Jewish prophet Elijah to a **woman who was a widow in Zarephath, in the land of Sidon**. This was a Jewish prophet being sent to a Gentile widow, to help her instead of Jewish widows who were plentiful. In other words, the issue was not need but receptivity to God. The Gentile widow was receptive to God and therefore received the blessing of God. What Jesus is saying to His fellow Nazareans then, is that you have rejected Me, and the consequence is that blessing will go to the Gentiles.

In verse 27 He gives another analogy. **And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.** This was another time when Israel was in rejection and unbelief. There were no lack of **lepers in Israel** at the time of **Elisha**, but **none of them** received

cleansing, only a foreign Gentile named **Naaman**, from **Syria** received cleansing. The lesson is the same, when the Jews are in rejection and unbelief, God sends His blessing to the Gentiles. And what they as a nation had done in the past, by rejecting God's prophets, they were about to do again, by rejecting God's Messiah. Andy Woods said, "...Luke highlights these events in order to show God's intention of universally blessing the Gentiles through Israel's rejection of Christ."⁹ Ultimately, the response to Jesus' Messiahship at Nazareth is a small scale picture of the larger rejection that is coming and the end that will result; God will bless the Gentiles through Israel's rejection.

In verse 28 it is quite clear that the people got the message. **And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.** What made the people so angry was that Jesus might go to the Gentiles. Bock said, "The idea that Jesus might reach out to outsiders produced anger. In effect, Jesus was saying that the Nazareans were worse than Syrian lepers and Phoenician widows."¹⁰ Later when Stephen and Paul make similar speeches in the Book of Acts, the Jews react similarly, attempting to stone them to death (Acts 7, 14).

So, in verse 29 **they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built.** Fruchtenbaum said, "The town of Nazareth is located in a little vale. South of the vale is a cliff that looks down upon the Jezreel Valley. That is where the enraged people now took Yeshua...." the purpose of which was **to throw Him down the cliff.** This may seem to be against the law, but there was such a law as "the lynch law" where if someone so flagrantly violated a law he could be executed on site and without trial. If the crowd thought Jesus was a false prophet, because He would not produce the miraculous signs of a prophet, then they might try to execute "the lynch law."

In any case, it was not Jesus' time, for verse 30 says, **But passing through their midst, He went His way.** How He did this is not stated, though the apparent implication is that it was supernatural. Otherwise, how is it that one man can escape an entire synagogue full of angry people. The word here translated **passing through** is *διερχομαι* and is similar to a word used of Jesus eluding His enemies in John 10:38, *εξερχομαι*. These words in their respective contexts seem to indicate some kind of supernatural escape in order to elude their grasp so that He could finish His ministry.

This section summarizes Jesus' teaching ministry, Israel's response to His ministry and the results, universal blessing to the Gentiles.

In summary, in Luke 4:14-15 we see Jesus' rise to initial popularity. In verse 14, after His baptism and temptations, He returned to the Galilee, empowered by the Spirit for His ministry. The news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district, indicating a growing fame. In verse 15, He began teaching in their synagogues, He was a popular Bible teacher, and He was being glorified by all. But in Luke 4:16-30 this popularity is seen to be short-

lived. Ultimately He would be rejected by all Israel as He was rejected by those of His hometown. In verse 16 He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and in the second part of the service the time came for Him to read. In verse 17, the attendant brought Him the scroll of Isaiah and He opened the scroll on a table and unrolled it till He found the place He wanted to read from, Isa 61. He then read one and a half verses, far less than was customary, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." In verse 20, when He rolled up the scroll He gave it back to the attendant and sat down, prepared to give an explanation or commentary. All eyes were fixed on Him, in part, because He did not read the customary twenty-one verses, and in part, because they wanted to hear His commentary. In verse 21 He began by saying, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." It was just Isa 61:1-2a that were fulfilled that day, not Isa 61:2b-3 which still remained to be fulfilled in the future. And He evidently elaborated somewhat, making clear that He was the Messiah. In verse 22, all were testifying good of Him, and were amazed at the gracious words which were falling from His lips, but they were not convinced He was the Messiah because of His common origins. And they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" And there was no way that Joseph's son could be the Messiah. He must be just a local boy with delusions of grandeur. They were in rejection and disbelief. And so in verse 23 He quoted to them a parable. He knew this is what they would say, if one were a Physician, let him prove it by healing himself. If Jesus was really the Messiah, let Him prove it by doing miracles as they heard He had done at Capernaum. But Jesus said the problem was deeper in verse 24, "no prophet is welcome in his hometown." Ultimately they were bitter that a local boy had become famous. This is the way most people were then and it is the way most people are now. Their jealousy and arrogance blinds them to the truth. In verse 25-27 Jesus gives two analogies of previous times in Israel's history when they were in rejection and disbelief and as a result God sent blessing to Gentiles. In the time of Elijah God blessed the widow of Zarephath and in the time of Elisha He blessed Naaman the Syrian. If Israel would not respond correctly to God's offer of blessing, then the blessing would go to the Gentiles. At this the people became enraged, in verse 28, and sought to enact the lynch law by throwing Him over the cliff. But supernaturally Jesus slipped through their midst and went His own way, for it was not His time.

And in this little summary of Jesus' teaching is laid out the entirety of the rest of His ministry and its results in the rest of this gospel. He would be rejected by Israel and so the blessing would go out to the Gentiles. This fits well with Luke's theme of universality, that Jesus came not only as the Messiah of Israel, but as the Savior of all mankind.

¹ Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 386.

² Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 392.

³ Tom Constable, *Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*.

⁴ Avi-Yonah and Baras quoted by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 2, 105.

⁵ Avi-Yonah and Baras quoted by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 2, 105.

⁶ Edersheim, quoted by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 2, 131.

⁷ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 2, 136.

⁸ Edersheim, quoted by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Volume 2, 135.

⁹ Andy Woods, *Luke Argument*, 18.

¹⁰ Darrell Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 419.