

Luke 4:9-30
September 9, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

If you were with us last week, you know that we began chapter 4 and only got through two to the temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness. So we are going to pick up where we left off and read through Satan's third attempt to lure Jesus with another temptation. Just as last week, we want to look for Satan's SCHEMES to tempt us, and we want to tag any STRATEGIES Jesus used to overcome the temptation. Let's read Luke 4:9-13.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.9:

- The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.

V.10:

- For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

V.11:

- they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. (Ps 91:11-12)"

V.12:

- Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test. (Deut 6:16)"

V.13:

- When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.9-11: The devil leads Jesus to Jerusalem and has Him stand on the highest point of the temple. What is Satan's next temptation? ["If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. (Ps 91:11-12)"]

Q: Let's see if we can tag some SCHEMES of Satan. What do you see? [Let people engage]

- Satan knows Scripture too, and he will use it to encourage us to engage in his temptation.

Q: Why is this particularly scary? [Jesus knew the Word of God inside and out and knew how to apply it. But many Christians don't, and when temptations come with the "support of Scripture verses," they become vulnerable and believe that what they are doing must be okay.]

Q: So what STRATEGY do you see Jesus using to deal with this temptation? [He again uses Scripture and reminds Satan that he has quoted Ps 91:11-12 out of context. Thus, he replies, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test. (Deut 6:16)"]

Q V.13: Let's not overlook this verse. The devil was unsuccessful in all three efforts to tempt Jesus. What do we learn about how the devil works? [He will leave us *until he finds another opportune time!* It's not hard to hear "I'll be back."]

HOOK:

Q: What do you think it takes to be successful in ministry? [Let people engage – Listen for who, what, where, etc.]

Transition: Many of you have tagged accurately what it takes to have a successful ministry. Luke is getting ready to back you up! I want us to think about any ministry we're involved in or called to lead. I believe **we CAN succeed in our ministry BY knowing the ANSWERS to basic questions of who, what, when, where, and how.** Jesus knew the answers to these basic questions for His ministry.

[Read 4:14-30]

V.14:

- Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power of the Spirit**, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

V.15:

- **He taught** in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

V.16:

- He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

V.17:

- The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

V.18:

- "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me **to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,**

V.19:

- **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

V.20:

- Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,

V.21:

- and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

V.22:

- All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

V.23:

- Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

V.24:

- "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown.

V.25:

- I assure you (“I say to you in truth”) that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.

V.26:

- Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.

V.27:

- And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

V.28:

- All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

V.29:

- They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

V.30:

- But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.14: Let’s get acquainted with the scene. When Jesus finished 40 days in the wilderness, where does He go to begin His ministry? [Galilee]

Q: Luke highlights again that Jesus was not alone. Who was with Him? [The Spirit]

Observation: Luke is very intentional about emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit. You’ll recall that the Spirit came in bodily form as a dove during His baptism to anoint Him and the ministry he was getting ready to start. Then the Spirit led Him to the desert, and then Luke stated that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit,” and now we read that Jesus went to Galilee in the “power of the Holy of Spirit.” *The Spirit’s power was the source of Jesus’s authority.*

Q V.15: How were the people responding to Him? [They were praising Him. Jesus was teaching in many synagogues, and they were strongly drawn to Him.]

Q V.16-19: Where specifically does He go to minister to others? [His hometown, Nazareth]

Q: Because it was Sabbath, He went to the synagogue. A rabbi apparently asked Him to read the Scripture text for that morning. What scroll was He given? [The prophet Isaiah]

Q V.18-19: Jesus chooses to read Isa 61:1-2. Let’s look at this closely.

Q: Who is still leading Jesus? [The Holy Spirit]

Q: When Isaiah penned this prophecy, who was he describing? [The Messiah]

Q: Based on this prophecy, what is the Messiah’s ministry?

- Preach the good news to the poor – What does Isaiah mean? [the term “poor” does refer to an economic condition, but not merely to economic status, for the poor and humble hope in God.]
- Proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind - What does Isaiah mean? [This is to be understood metaphorically. Whereas it may include healings and exorcisms, **“freedom” (aphesin) always refers to the forgiveness of sins elsewhere in Luke-Acts.** This may be a reference to the blind that Jesus healed. Only one specific example is given in Luke (18:35–43), but others are clearly referred to in 7:21–22. There is another sense, however, in which “blind” refers metaphorically to those who are “spiritually blind.”]
- Release the oppressed - What does Isaiah mean? [The same word translated “release” here is translated “freedom” earlier in this verse.]
- Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor - What does Isaiah mean? [This is a synonym for the “good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus is saying that God’s kingdom has come. He is emphasizing the present time and opportunity for salvation, because it’s also implied that the Lord’s favor wouldn’t last forever.]

Q V.20-21: Jesus makes an important statement after he finished reading the scroll. What does He say? [“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”]

Q V.21: What has Jesus really said? [He’s saying I am the Messiah!]

Q V.22: How are the people responding to Jesus at this point? [All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. They also wondered, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”]

Transition: Up to this point, it’s “so far, so good.” But the tenor of this gathering begins to change. First, the people begin to question the authority with which Jesus could say these things. After all, isn’t he Joseph’s son – the boy they saw grow up?!

Jesus responds to their query in v. 23-28. We need to look at all five verses.

Q V.23-24: Let’s look at. Why do you think he makes these statements? [Jesus possessed a unique awareness of others’ thoughts. So, He’s sensing opposition developing among the people, so He’s addressing that. Furthermore, He knew they wanted Him to perform in Nazareth the same miracles He had done in Capernaum, but He refused. That’s the meaning of the phrase, “Physician, heal thyself.” Do a miracle!]

Q V.25-27: Jesus chooses to tell His listeners two accounts involving the prophet Elijah and his successor, Elisha. What is significant about these two accounts? [They are both stories of how God used His prophets to help a **Gentile widow and a Gentile leper from Syria.** God’s acts of grace extended to Gentiles, not just the Israelites.]

Q V.28-29: How did the people respond to Jesus? [They were furious! They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. They wanted to kill Him!!]

Observation: Some theologians feel it's difficult to know exactly what Luke meant in that Nazareth is built on a slope and no clear "brow" or cliff is nearby. So their educated guess is that Luke may be referencing the customary practice of throwing a person down from a height before stoning.

Q V.30: Did their attempt to kill Jesus work? [No!] Why not? [Because Jesus was able to miraculously escape from the angry crowd.]

LOOK:

I stated earlier that I believe we can succeed in our ministry by knowing the answers to basic questions of who, what, when, where, and why. Jesus knew the answers to these basic questions for His ministry. After today's study, let's see if it's clear to us:

Who: Who was Jesus's target audience? The poor, the oppressed, the sick. Those who were marginalized.

What: What was His message? The Good News. Salvation is available for both Jew and Gentile.

When: When did His ministry begin, and when did He understand it to be completed? It began upon the anointing of the Holy Spirit and prayer with His father for 40 days in the wilderness. It would be completed after He was resurrected and ascended into Heaven.

Where: What settings would Jesus use to preach the Good News? Synagogues, Hillsides, Boats, wherever the marginalized existed.

How: How would He accomplish His ministry? Empowerment of the Holy Spirit, teach, prayer, obedience to His father's direction.

Why: Jesus knew His "why" for doing this ministry. His mission was to "seek and to save the lost."

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 182–185). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Satan questioned the Father's faithfulness when he asked Jesus to jump from the temple and prove that the Father would keep His promise (Ps. 91:11–12). Thus, the enemy attacked the three basic virtues of the Christian life—faith, hope, and love.

The pinnacle was probably a high point at the southeast corner of the temple, far above the Kidron Valley. Satan can tempt us even in the Holy City at the highest part of the holy temple! Following the example of Jesus, Satan decided to quote Scripture, and he selected Psalm 91:11–12. Of course, he misquoted the promise and besides he omitted “in all thy ways.”

When a child of God is in the will of God, he can claim the Father's protection and care. But if he willfully gets into trouble and expects God to rescue him, then he is tempting God. (For an example of this, see Ex. 17:1–7.) We tempt God when we “force” Him (or dare Him) to act contrary to His Word. It is a dangerous thing to try God's patience, even though He is indeed long-suffering and gracious.

Our Lord's reply was, “on the other hand, it is written” (Matt. 4:7); and He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16. *Jesus balanced Scripture with Scripture to get the total expression of God's will.* If you isolate verses from their contexts, or passages from the total revelation of Scripture, you can prove almost anything from the Bible. Almost every false cult claims to be based on the teachings of the Bible. When we get our orders from God by picking out verses from here and there in the Bible, we are not living by faith. We are living by chance and tempting the Lord. “For whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23), and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Jesus came out of the wilderness a victor, but Satan did not give up. He watched for other opportunities to tempt the Savior away from the Father's will. “Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle,” said Andrew Bonar; and he was right.

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The Scriptures (Luke 4:14–30)

The events recorded in John 1:19–4:45 took place at this time, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not record them. They moved right into the Lord’s ministry in Galilee, and Luke alone reports His visit to His hometown of Nazareth. By now, the news had spread widely about the miracle-worker from Nazareth; so His family, friends, and neighbors were anxious to see and hear Him.

It was our Lord’s custom to attend public worship, a custom His followers should imitate today (Heb. 10:24–25). He might have argued that the “religious system” was corrupt, or that He didn’t need the instruction; but instead, He made His way on the Sabbath to the place of prayer.

A typical synagogue service opened with an invocation for God’s blessing and then the recitation of the traditional Hebrew confession of faith (Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21). This was followed by prayer and the prescribed readings from the Law and from the Prophets, with the reader paraphrasing the Hebrew Scriptures in Aramaic.

This was followed by a brief sermon given by one of the men of the congregation or perhaps by a visiting rabbi (see Acts 13:14–16). If a priest was present, the service closed with a benediction. Otherwise, one of the laymen prayed and the meeting was dismissed.

Jesus was asked to read the Scripture text and to give the sermon. The passage He read included Isaiah 61:1–2, and He selected it for His “text.” The Jewish rabbis interpreted this passage to refer to the Messiah, and the people in the synagogue knew it. You can imagine how shocked they were when Jesus boldly said that it was written about Him and that He had come to usher in the “acceptable year of the Lord.”

The reference here is the “Year of Jubilee” described in Leviticus 25. Every seventh year was a “Sabbatical year” for the nation, when the land was allowed to rest; and every fiftieth year (after seven Sabbaticals) was set apart as the “Year of Jubilee.” The main purpose of this special year was the balancing of the economic system: slaves were set free and returned to their families, property that was sold reverted to the original owners, and all debts were canceled. The land lay fallow as man and beast rested and rejoiced in the Lord.

Jesus applied all of this to His own ministry, not in a political or economic sense, but in a physical and spiritual sense. He had certainly brought Good News of salvation to bankrupt sinners and healing to brokenhearted and rejected people. He had delivered many from blindness and from bondage to demons and disease. Indeed, it was a spiritual “Year of Jubilee” for the nation of Israel!

The problem was that His listeners would not believe in Him. They saw Him only as the son of Mary and Joseph, the Boy they had watched grow up in their own city. Furthermore, they wanted Him to perform in Nazareth the same miracles He had done in Capernaum, but He refused. That’s the meaning of the phrase, “Physician, heal thyself.” Do a miracle!

At first, they admired the way He taught, but it didn’t take long for their admiration to turn into antagonism. Why? *Because Jesus began to remind them of God’s goodness to the Gentiles!* The Prophet Elijah bypassed all the Jewish widows and helped a Gentile widow in Sidon (1 Kings 17:8–16), and his successor Elisha healed a Gentile leper from Syria (2 Kings 5:1–15). Our Lord’s message of grace was a blow to the proud Jewish exclusivism of the congregation, and they would

not repent. Imagine this hometown Boy saying that Jews had to be saved by grace just like the pagan Gentiles!

The congregation was so angry, they took action to kill Jesus! St. Augustine said, “They love truth when it enlightens them, but hate truth when it accuses them.” That applies well to many congregations today, people who want “gracious words” (Luke 4:22) but who don’t want to face the truth (see John 1:17).

In spite of the unbelief of the people in Nazareth, the Scriptures declared that Jesus of Nazareth is God’s Son, the Messiah sent to fulfill His promises. The people who do not want Him and who reject “the acceptable year of the Lord” will one day face “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa 61:2). How significant that Jesus stopped reading at that very place!

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 213-215)

4. JESUS’S TEMPTATION IN THE AREA OF THE TIMING OF HIS MINISTRY (4:9–12).

4:9–12. **The devil** tried to get Jesus to change the timing and structure of His ministry. Jesus knew He must go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. He knew that He was the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13–53:12). The devil challenged Jesus to throw Himself off **the highest point of the temple**. This was perhaps at the southeastern corner of the wall overlooking the deep Kidron Valley below. Satan meant that the nation, seeing Jesus’ miraculous protection from such a jump, would immediately accept Him. The devil even quoted Psalm 91:11–12 to show that the Messiah would be kept safe from harm.

However, Jesus was aware of the implication. To receive the acceptance of the people without going to the cross would be to question whether God was really in the plan at all. That was exactly the situation Moses wrote about in Deuteronomy 6:16, which Jesus quoted. Moses referred back to a time when the people wondered whether God was really with them (Ex. 17:7). But Jesus was confident of the fact that God was with Him and that the Father’s plan and timing were perfect. So Jesus would not fall for Satan’s temptation.

5. SATAN’S DEPARTURE FROM JESUS (4:13).

4:13. **The devil** departed, not permanently, but only **until** a latter more **opportune time**.

IV. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:14–9:50)

Jesus’ early ministry was primarily in Galilee, though from John 1–4 it is known that He did have an early ministry in Judea and Jerusalem before His Galilean ministry. Two purposes of the Galilean ministry were to authenticate Jesus and to call the disciples who would follow Him.

A. *The initiation of Jesus’ ministry (4:14–30) (Matt. 4:12–17; Mark 1:14–15)*

These 17 verses serve as Luke’s summary of what happened throughout the entire ministry of Jesus: Jesus declared Himself to be the Messiah (Luke 4:21); the Jewish hearers proved themselves to be unworthy of God’s blessings (vv. 28–29), and the gospel would also go to the Gentiles (vv. 24–27).

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1. JESUS'S RECEPTION IN GALILEE (4:14–15).

4:14–15. Returning **to Galilee**, Jesus was **in the power** (*dynamei*, "spiritual ability") **of the Spirit**. The Spirit had descended on Him (3:21–22), He had been led by the Spirit into the desert (4:1), and now He ministered "in the power of the Spirit." The Spirit's power was the source of Jesus' authority, which Luke set forth in chapters 4–6. The initial response was positive. The **news about Him spread** and as they heard Him teach **in their synagogues ... everyone praised Him**.

2. JESUS'S REJECTION IN HIS HOMETOWN, NAZARETH (4:16–30) (Matt. 13:53–58; Mark 6:1–6).

4:16–30. Jesus initially was a popular Teacher, so when He went back to His hometown, it was natural for Him to teach in synagogues. It was the custom in the synagogue for a man to stand while he was reading the Scriptures but then to sit while explaining the portion he had read. The portion of Scripture Jesus read was **Isaiah** 61:1–2, a messianic passage. He concluded His reading with the words, **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor**—stopping in the middle of the verse

without reading the next line in Isaiah 61:2 about God's vengeance. When Jesus added, **Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing**, the implication was clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who could bring the kingdom of God which had been promised for so long—but His First Advent was not His time for judgment. The crowd was fascinated at His teaching—**The eyes of everyone ... were fastened on Him** (Luke 4:20). Jesus' words plainly stated that the offer of the favorable year of the Lord (i.e., the kingdom time) was being made to them through Him (v. 21).

The people **were amazed** (*ethaumazon*, “wondered, marveled”; cf. comments on 2:18) at His **gracious words** (lit., “words of grace”), but they immediately began to question the authority with which He could say these things. How could **Joseph's Son**—the Boy they saw grow up in their town—be the Messiah? Jesus, sensing their opposition (4:23–24), noted two instances in which God's prophets ministered miraculous acts of grace to Gentiles while Israel was in unbelief—**Elijah** and the **widow of Zarephath** (vv. 25–26; cf. 1 Kings 17:8–16), and **Elisha** and **Naaman the Syrian** leper (Luke 4:27; cf. 2 Kings 5:1–19).

Jesus' mention of Gentiles rather than Jews having God's blessing caused **the people** to be **furious** (Luke 4:28). They attempted to kill Him, **but He walked right through the crowd** (v. 30). Luke no doubt described a miraculous escape from the angry crowd. This pattern is seen throughout the rest of Jesus' ministry: Jesus went to the Jews; they rejected Him; He told of Gentile participation in the kingdom; some Jews wanted to kill Him. But He was not killed until the proper time, when He chose to die (23:46; cf. John 10:15, 17–18).

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The people **were amazed** (*ethaumazon*, “wondered, marveled”; cf. comments on 2:18) at His **gracious words** (lit., “words of grace”), but they immediately began to question the authority with which He could say these things. How could **Joseph's Son**—the Boy they saw grow up in their town—be the Messiah? Jesus, sensing their opposition (4:23–24), noted two instances in which God's prophets ministered miraculous acts of grace to Gentiles while Israel was in unbelief—**Elijah** and the **widow of Zarephath** (vv. 25–26; cf. 1 Kings 17:8–16), and **Elisha** and **Naaman the Syrian** leper (Luke 4:27; cf. 2 Kings 5:1–19).

Jesus' mention of Gentiles rather than Jews having God's blessing caused **the people** to be **furious** (Luke 4:28). They attempted to kill Him, **but He walked right through the crowd** (v. 30). Luke no doubt described a miraculous escape from the angry crowd. This pattern is seen throughout the rest of Jesus' ministry: Jesus went to the Jews; they rejected Him; He told of Gentile participation in the kingdom; some Jews wanted to kill Him. But He was not killed until the proper time, when He chose to die (23:46; cf. John 10:15, 17–18).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1519-1520). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

4:14–15 For more on the timing of Jesus’ Galilean ministry, see note on Mk 1:14.

4:16–30 This is probably Luke’s version of the episode recorded in Mt 13:53–58 and Mk 6:1–6, which Luke has moved forward for thematic purposes. The emphasis at the outset of Jesus’ ministry is His understanding of His messianic calling to the marginalized—whether Jews or Gentiles—and the rejection that resulted. According to plan, Jesus focused His three years of ministry primarily on His own people, but as His ministry began, He recognized that there would be no man-made barriers to the mercy God offered through His Son.

4:16 Rabbinic sources give some indication of what a synagogue service in the first century entailed. Part of the service included the invitation for any qualified male present to give a homily—an invitation Jesus accepted on this occasion.

4:18–21 Luke undoubtedly summarized a reading of Is 61:1–2 with an accompanying address by Jesus (cp. v. 22). The reading does not include the final portion of Is 61:2, “and the day of our God’s vengeance,” because Jesus reserves judgment for His second coming.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 147–160). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

4:9 The devil led him to Jerusalem. The climax of the temptations for Luke took place in Jerusalem. Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, could simply say “to the holy city” (cf. Matt 4:5; 27:53). For Jerusalem’s importance in Luke-Acts, see Introduction 7 (2).

On the highest point of the temple. We do not know exactly what part of the temple is meant. The term is used of the temple only here and in the Matthean parallel in 4:5. The Greek term means “extremity” or “tip.” Traditionally the site thought to be described here is the southeastern corner of the temple area overlooking the Kidron Valley, but again Luke was less concerned with identifying the exact geographical location as in telling what happened.

If you are the Son of God. Like the first temptation, the third was introduced by this conditional phrase.

4:10 For it is written. Even the devil can quote Scripture, and here he sought to support his challenge to Jesus from the Scripture itself. Defeated by Jesus’ use of the Word of God in the previous two temptations, the devil sought to use the Scriptures for his own purposes. There is no evidence that Ps 91:11–12, which the devil quoted, was interpreted messianically in Judaism; but if the psalm states a truth concerning any believer, how much more (*a fortiori*) is this true of the Messiah. Yet knowing Scripture is not enough; one must interpret it correctly.

He will command his angels concerning you. Was Jesus being tempted here to perform a great sign before the people and thus prove that he is the Messiah? The weakness of this interpretation is that Luke did not mention an audience for whom such a sign could be performed. Furthermore, Jesus’ answer was not directed at such an interpretation. The temptation appears to have been to tempt God by putting him to the test by forcing him to fulfill his promise of protection. True worship does not seek to dictate to God how he must fulfill his covenantal promises.

4:12 Luke understood the OT quotation from Deut 6:16 as a command for Jesus to obey rather than as a command for the devil to refrain from tempting Jesus, who is the “Lord your God.”

4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting. Luke understood the three temptations as representative of the kinds of temptations Jesus confronted during the forty days in the desert.

He left him until an opportune time. Someone has suggested that Jesus was free from temptation from here on until Satan entered Judas Iscariot (22:3) and Peter (22:31) and his time came once more (22:53). Yet Satan was active during all of Jesus' ministry as well (8:12; 10:17–18; 11:14–22; 13:11–17; 22:28). This statement rather indicates that a direct confrontation with the devil (such as we read of here) does not occur again until the arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

4:14 Jesus returned to Galilee. Galilee, which has been proleptically alluded to in 1:26; 2:4, 39; cf. also 3:1, is described as where the opening scene of Jesus' ministry took place. Compare also 23:5; Acts 10:37; 13:31.

In the power of the Spirit. Having been anointed at his baptism by the Spirit “in bodily form” (3:22, only Luke), being “full of the Spirit” (4:1, only Luke), and having been led by the Spirit to do battle and defeat Satan, Jesus “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14, only Luke) returned to Galilee to begin his ministry. His ministry, like the church's later ministry, was marked by the Spirit's power. For the tie between the “Spirit” and “power,” see comments on 1:17.

And news about him spread through the whole countryside. This summary of Jesus' actions and fame was known to Luke's readers even though Luke had not yet given any examples, for these things were “not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). No doubt they knew “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth ... and how he went around doing good and healing” (Acts 10:38). Another such proleptic reference to Jesus' ministry is found in Luke 4:23.

4:15 He taught in their synagogues. What Jesus taught was not mentioned at this point, but Luke emphasized his role as a teacher. As a result of Jesus' teaching ministry, Theophilus could assume that the ultimate source of what he had been taught (1:4) was Jesus himself. All of 4:14–44 is set in the context of Jesus' preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. “Their” suggests that Luke was a Gentile writing to Gentiles.

And everyone praised him. The universal, positive response of the common people to Jesus was a strong Lukan emphasis. See Introduction 7 (1). The term “praise” (literally *glorified*) was usually used for God (Mark 2:12; Matt 9:8).

The Lukan Message

We already have noted the importance Luke placed on the Spirit's coming at Jesus' baptism. This theme is picked up in 4:1, 14, 18–19, 36. Luke retained the reference in the tradition to Jesus' being led by the Spirit into the wilderness (cf. Matt 4:1), but he added the statement that Jesus was “full of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1). We have noted already the frequency and thus the importance of this expression in Luke-Acts. Jesus' victory over the devil thus resulted not simply because of his knowledge and use of the Scriptures (as in Matthew) but also because he was “full of the Spirit.” Thus unlike Israel, which failed in its wilderness experience, God's Son was victorious. The Spirit's importance in this is evident, and Jesus' experience became a model of how Theophilus was to live out his life. Even as Jesus, “full of the Spirit,” was victorious over the devil, so in Acts, Peter (4:8), Stephen (6:5, 8; 7:55), Barnabas (11:24), and Paul (13:9) were also filled with the Spirit and followed in their Lord's footsteps. Luke's readers are exhorted by their example to be filled with the Spirit as well. The concluding summary again emphasizes that Jesus' entire future ministry is to be understood as taking place “in the power of the Spirit.”

The passage's primary function, however, is to demonstrate to Luke's readers why Jesus was the kind of Messiah he was. At the temptation Jesus' messianic role is made clear for the reader. The temptation did not serve to clarify this role for Jesus himself, for there was no struggle and introspection for him about which path to take. God's Son clearly knew what the messianic role called for. The temptations involved a willingness to do what he already knew God wanted him to

do. For the reader, however, this account makes clear why Jesus was not a political messiah. Such a view of the messianic task comes from the devil. Jesus would have nothing to do with it. Thus he would not fit the Jewish portrait of the messiah. He was called to a messiahship that in our passage is described negatively (i.e., what he would not do). In the next account it would be described positively (cf. 4:18–19).

An additional Lukan emphasis found in this passage involves the central importance of the Scriptures in the life of the church. Jesus' knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures helped enable him to defeat the devil. Like the church in Berea (Acts 17:11), Jesus' attitude was shaped by the Scriptures. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6), Jesus observed the commandments and regulations of Scripture blamelessly. He had been raised this way by his parents (2:39, 41). He saw his mission in light of the fulfillment of Scripture (4:18–19) and taught that the way to eternal life lies in the obedience to the scriptural teaching (10:25–28; 18:18–22). As for Luke's readers, obedience to that scriptural teaching centers on faith in and obedience to the one who is the focus of the Scriptures—Jesus Christ, God's Son. It would be difficult for Luke's readers not to understand how central and important the Scriptures are for their Christian life. Here as in his being "full of the Spirit," Jesus is a model for the believer.

Finally, we find in the concluding summary the Lukan emphasis that points out that the people ("everyone") had a positive attitude and response toward Jesus.

IV. JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE (4:16–9:50)

The fourth major section of Luke centers in Galilee and is held together primarily by this geographical orientation. As in Mark and Matthew, Luke portrayed the beginning of Jesus' ministry as taking place in Galilee. In "orderly" fashion (1:3) Luke prepared his readers for this section by beginning with Jesus' sermon at Nazareth, which serves as a programmatic explanation of Jesus' ministry.

In this major section "the Evangelist spoke about one stage of Jesus' way. In this phase of his career Jesus was the one who was anointed-empowered by the Holy Spirit, and his activity demonstrated God's kingly power. The accent is on power."

1. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (4:16–4:30)

Jesus' programmatic sermon is meant to assist Luke's readers in understanding the nature of Jesus' messiahship and the response it would elicit from the Jewish leadership. Thereupon Luke followed Mark 1:21–45 closely and provided his readers with examples of Jesus' healing power and teaching ministry.

(1) Jesus' Sermon in Nazareth—A Thematic Explanation of Jesus' Ministry (4:16–30)

Context

Luke began his portrayal of Jesus' ministry with the account of Jesus' first sermon. This sermon is quite important, for it is programmatic, and in it Luke provided his readers with Jesus' own description of his mission and ministry. Luke placed this first description of what Jesus taught at the very beginning of his ministry, even though he knew that Jesus already had a successful ministry in Capernaum (4:23), for his orderly presentation of the things Jesus said and did was

more important than chronological exactness. In a similar way he began his portrayal of the ministry of the early church in Acts with Peter's sermon (cf. Acts 2:14–40). The programmatic nature of Jesus' sermon is evident from the summary in Luke 4:43–44 in which the "good news" refers back to the contents of this sermon (4:18). The importance of Jesus' sermon is also highlighted by Luke's statement that "the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him" (4:20) as well as by Luke's recording that Jesus intentionally "found the place where it is written" (4:17). The importance of the sermon is further heightened by the fact that it involves the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Finally, the central role of this account is witnessed to by the fact that when John the Baptist raised the question of whether Jesus was the expected one (7:20), Jesus in His reply repeated this text (cf. 7:21–22 with 4:18–21).

The main problem within this account involves the relationship of 4:16–22 with 4:23–30. In the former Jesus appears to have been accepted and praised, but in the latter there is a surprising reversal, and he was rejected. Yet this apparent conflict clearly fits Luke's purpose, for the account reveals not only the heart and content of Jesus' message to Luke's readers (4:18–21) and the favor Jesus found in general among the common people (4:22), but it also foresees his rejection (4:23–30); the shadow of the cross hung over Jesus' ministry from the very beginning.

Comments

4:16 He went to Nazareth. No doubt Luke's readers knew about Jesus of "Nazareth," and Luke prepared them for this by his statements in 1:26; 2:4, 39, 51. The parallel in Mark 6:1 states "to his hometown," but from Mark 1:24 and 6:4 it is evident that Nazareth was meant.

Where he had been brought up. This recalls Luke 2:39–51 and prepares us for 4:24.

As was his custom. Even as Jesus attended the synagogue and the temple, so would the early church.

And he stood up to read. Luke implied that the ruler of the synagogue (*archisynagogos*; cf. Acts 13:15) invited Jesus to read and comment on the Scriptures. This is the oldest account we possess of a synagogue service, which apparently contained the following: the singing a psalm; the reading of the Shema (Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21); the repetition of the Eighteen Blessings (the *Shemoneh Esreh*); a reading of the Law in Hebrew, followed by a translation in Aramaic from the targum since Hebrew was no longer used and understood by the average person; a reading from the Prophets in Hebrew, followed by a translation in Aramaic from the targum; a sermon on the Scripture; and a concluding blessing by the ruler of the synagogue.

4:17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. There was perhaps in Jesus' day a fixed three-year pattern of readings from the Law, and the present text may suggest that there was a cycle of assigned readings in the Prophets as well. As the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown, the entire text of Isaiah could be contained in a single scroll.

Unrolling it. Some manuscripts (A,B,L,W) read "opened," perhaps because the word used for scroll here is *biblion*, which later came to mean a *codex* or *book*. "Unrolling," however, is the better reading and a more appropriate expression for the opening of a scroll.

He found the place where it is written. Luke indicated that Jesus deliberately chose the following passage to read and thus emphasized Jesus' messianic consciousness as he began his ministry. See comments on 2:23.

4:18 The following scriptural quotation comes from Isa 61:1a, b, d [c is omitted]; 58:6d; and 61:2a. Most significant in this quotation is the omission of Isa 61:2b, "And the day of vengeance of our God." For Luke the present day, i.e., the "today" of Luke 4:21, was a day of salvation, the time of opportunity (cf. 2 Cor 6:2). Most scholars have argued that the insertion of Isa 58:6d into

the quotation is from Luke's hand. If this is so, Luke was then adding another part of the description of the suffering servant of Isaiah to help explain Jesus' mission more clearly for his readers. The importance of this Isaianic quotation for Luke is evident for a number of reasons. First, he did not have to include this quotation in the account, as the parallel in Mark 6:1–6a reveals. Second, this is Scripture and thus for Luke and his readers infallibly reveals the purpose of Jesus' ministry. Finally, Luke pointed out that Jesus himself chose this passage and described his ministry as aimed at its fulfillment.

The Spirit of the Lord ... anointed me. This anointing refers to Luke 3:22 (cf. Acts 10:38) and the divine commissioning for Jesus' ministry. This anointing was not just a prophetic anointing (Luke 4:24) but a messianic one as well (3:22; Acts 4:26–27; 10:38), for Jesus is the bringer, not just the herald, of salvation. Although only Jesus was said by Luke to have been anointed by the Spirit (cf. Acts 4:26; 10:38), he serves here as a model for Spirit-filled teachers and healers in Acts.

To preach good news. For Luke "to preach the good news" meant *to preach the gospel*. In Luke the terms to "preach" (*kērussō*) and "preach the gospel" (*euangelizō*) are essentially synonyms.

Poor. The "poor" is a strong Lukan concern. See Introduction 8 (5). In Luke the term "poor" does refer to an economic condition, but not merely to economic status, for the poor and humble hope in God.

To proclaim freedom for the prisoners. This is to be understood metaphorically. Whereas it may include healings and exorcisms, "freedom" (*aphesin*) always refers to the forgiveness of sins elsewhere in Luke-Acts.

Recovery of sight for the blind. This may be a reference to the blind that Jesus healed. Only one specific example is given in Luke (18:35–43), but others are clearly referred to in 7:21–22. There is another sense, however, in which "blind" refers metaphorically to those who are "spiritually blind."

To release the oppressed. The same word translated "release" here is translated "freedom" earlier in this verse. It probably is best to understand this metaphorically as standing in synonymous parallelism with the preceding statements (cf. esp. Acts 26:18, where forgiveness of sins parallels release for the oppressed in Luke 4:18), although there is a literal dimension in it as well (cf. 4:31–37; 13:16; Acts 10:38). This statement from Isa 58:6 is not meant to serve as a substitute for Luke's omission of 61:2b in the next verse because it appears before rather than after 61:2a.

4:19 The year of the Lord's favor. This is basically a synonym for the "good news of the kingdom of God," as Luke 4:43 shows. Jesus claimed here that God's kingdom had come. In fulfillment of the OT promises, salvation was now being offered to all. Even though the Lord purposely omitted the reference to the "day of God's vengeance" from his quotation of Isa 61:2 to emphasize the present time and opportunity for salvation, there is nevertheless present here the implication that this period of God's favor would not last forever. Although Isa 61:1–2 develops certain themes from the concept of the Jubilee Year (cf. Lev 25:8–55), Luke did not seem to have been thinking of this here.

4:20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The three verbs *rolled (c)*, *gave back (b)*, *sat down (a)* form a chiasmus with *stood up (A)*, *was handed (B)*, *unrolling (C)* in Luke 4:16–17. Whereas the reading of Scripture was done standing (4:16), the exposition was performed sitting (cf. Matt 23:2; 26:55). In Acts 13:16 Paul is portrayed as standing in the synagogue while preaching. This may indicate a different practice in the Diaspora. Luke

made no mention of the reading of the targumic translation of the Hebrew text, since it was irrelevant to his purpose.

The eyes of everyone ... were fastened. “Everyone” is in emphatic position. The fixture of the eyes upon someone is used positively in Acts 1:10; 6:15. This serves as a literary device to focus the attention of Luke’s readers upon the importance of what Jesus is about to say.

4:21 This verse is best understood as a summary of Jesus’ sermon.

Today. Luke gave special emphasis to this word by placing it first in Jesus’ saying. “Now” the messianic age is already realized in Jesus’ coming. See Introduction 8 (2). This period continues into the time of the church (cf. Acts 13:32–33), i.e., the time of Luke’s readers, as the Spirit who anointed Jesus then comes upon the church (Acts 2:16–21). “Today” does not mean literally *in these last twenty-four hours* but *since the events of Luke 3:1ff.*

This scripture is fulfilled. For the importance of this theme, see Introduction 7 (1).

4:22 All spoke well of him. Literally, *All were witnessing to him.* This can be understood positively as “witnessed to” (cf. Acts 13:22; 14:3; 15:8; 22:5) or negatively as “witnessed against” (cf. Matt. 23:31; John 7:7; 18:23) with the pronoun “him” being either a dative of advantage (“to him”) or disadvantage (“against him”). Most commentators understand this as a positive statement, although a negative interpretation would fit better with the next verses. The following verb, “were amazed,” can also be understood positively (Luke 7:9) or negatively (John 7:15, 21). It seems best to understand both these two verbs positively because Luke tended to use these terms positively elsewhere in Luke-Acts and because the object of the latter verb is “the gracious words that came from his lips.” As a result (although it will make the transition to Luke 4:23–30 more difficult) it is best to understand this verse as a positive response toward Jesus’ teaching up to this point. As in Acts 4:13–16; 6:15, Jesus’ opponents witnessed to the truth of his claims (and to the church’s proclamation).

Gracious words. Whereas the Greek expression “words of grace” may be understood as a descriptive genitive (i.e., “grace” describes the kind of words—gracious words), it is better to understand the expression as an objective genitive describing the content of his words, i.e., words concerning God’s grace, as in Acts 14:3; 20:32.

Isn’t this Joseph’s son? This can be understood positively as a pleasant surprise or negatively as in Mark 6:3 (cf. John 7:15). In light of what follows, it is best to interpret it as a negative statement.

4:23 This proverb. The Greek term is *parabolē*, which has a broad range of meaning from story and example parables, allegories, similitudes, and metaphors to proverbs. This particular proverb has numerous parallels both in form and in context. For the latter cf. Luke 23:35. For the former we find in Greek literature (Euripides, *Incertarum Fabularum Fragmenta* 1086) the following proverb, “A physician for others, but himself teeming with sores”; and in Jewish literature (*Genesis Rabbah* 23:4) we find, “Physician, physician heal thine own limp!” Here as elsewhere (Luke 5:22; 6:8; 7:40; 9:47; 11:17) Jesus possessed a unique awareness of others’ thoughts.

What we have heard that you did in Capernaum. In the setting of Jesus this expresses a skepticism about the factuality of these reports and a demand that Jesus perform the alleged miracles before them. This incident in Nazareth, although placed first in Jesus’ ministry by Luke, was not first chronologically. Rather its placement served Luke’s “orderly” purpose. Only in the following account in 4:31–37 and in 7:1–10 (cf. also 10:15) do we read of Jesus’ miracles in Capernaum. The invitation to read and comment on the Scriptures would also have been more

likely after Jesus had already become engaged in a ministry of preaching and healing. This is therefore another proof that “orderly” in 1:3 does not mean chronologically.

4:24 I tell you the truth. “The truth” is literally *Amen*, which can be translated “verily/truly.” This expression is found singularly or doubly over seventy times in the Gospels and only on Jesus’ lips. It was used traditionally in Judaism at the end of a statement in order to confirm what had been said, but Jesus used it to introduce and stress what follows.

No prophet is accepted. Mark 6:4 has “a prophet [is not] without honor.” Luke perhaps used the word “accepted” (*dektos*) in order to better parallel the “acceptable [*dekton*] year of the Lord” in Luke 4:18. No mention is made in this saying of Jesus’ rejection by his family as in the parallel in Mark 6:4. In general Luke tended to minimize the negative descriptions of Jesus’ family found in Mark. This proverb is also found in John 4:44 and the GT 31. Even as the prophets were rejected by Israel, so too Jesus was rejected in Nazareth and later rejected in Jerusalem.

In his hometown. This picks up “in your hometown” of the previous verse.

4:25 I assure you. “I assure you” is literally, *I say to you in truth*. Like “truly,” this emphasizes the truthfulness of what is to follow.

In Elijah’s time. Besides this passage we find clear allusions to Elijah/Elisha in 7:11–17; 9:52–55, 61–62. Luke may have had a special interest in Elijah/Elisha because of their ministry to Gentiles. In both this and the next example, Gentiles were dealt with graciously by God over Israelites. In 2:30–32; 3:6 God’s purpose included Gentiles, and in Acts the Gentile mission evoked a positive response whereas the Jewish mission for the most part did not (cf. 10:34–35; 13:46–47; 18:5–6; 28:25–28).

Three and a half years. As in Jas 5:17, Luke used three and a half years instead of the three years stated in 1 Kgs 18:1. Three and a half may function more as a stereotyped number of a period of distress (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14) than an exact period of time.

4:26 Yet Elijah was not sent. This is an example of the “divine passive” and means *God did not send*. It avoids using God’s name out of reverence for that name in keeping with the Third Commandment. “The sky was shut” of the previous verse is another example.

To any of them. This can be understood: Elijah was sent “to none of them except this one of them” or “to none of them but instead to someone else.” The latter alternative is more likely.

4:27 The story of Naaman provides a second example of God’s grace to Gentiles. Luke 4:25–27 supplies the key for understanding this account. For Jesus these examples demonstrated that Nazareth could not make exclusive claims on him; and since Nazareth had in fact rejected him, he would go elsewhere. Nazareth may have rejected him, but others would receive him gladly. For Luke these examples showed that the Jewish people had no exclusive claims on Jesus, and since they rejected him, the gospel of 4:18–21 has been offered to the Gentiles. And just as Elijah and Elisha were better received outside of Israel, so the gospel message would receive a better hearing among the Gentiles.

4:28 All the people. An example of Luke’s use of overstatement (cf. 4:15). The furious response finds parallels in Acts.

4:29 They got up. Compare Acts 6:9.

Drove him out of the town. Compare Luke 20:15; Acts 7:58.

Took him to the brow of the hill. It is difficult to know exactly what Luke meant in that Nazareth is built on a slope and no clear “brow” or cliff is nearby. He may have been less concerned here with the topography than with a desire to allude specifically to the martyrdoms of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and possibly James (cf. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 2.23.11–18) or in general to the

customary practice of throwing a person down from a height before stoning (cf. John 8:59; Acts 7:54–60; *Sanh* 43a, 45a).

To throw him down. The degree in which the preceding statements foreshadow the coming crucifixion is unclear, but at the very beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry, the cross was casting its shadow over Jesus' life.

4:30 But he walked right through the crowd. Luke may or may not have been implying a miraculous escape here. Regardless, Luke's point was that Jesus' hour would not come until he arrived in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 22:53; John 7:30; 8:59).