

The Ministry

Luke 4:17 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.”

Jesus participated in the service that day by opening the scroll and reading one and a half verses (Isa 61:1–2a). He read a portion that dealt directly with the earthly ministry of the Messiah (such as preaching and healing) and stopped just before the passage went on to describe His coming judgment in the end times.

Luke 4:20 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?”

The application was short and to the point, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This was a direct and full claim to be the Messiah.

Luke 4:23 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.’ ”

The Lord knew that this popularity was shallow. There was no real appreciation of His true identity or worth.

To them, He was just one of their own home-town boys who had made good in Capernaum. He anticipated that they would say to Him, “Physician, heal yourself!” Ordinarily this parable would mean, “Do for yourself what you have done for others. Cure your own condition, since you claim to cure others.” But here the meaning is slightly different. It is explained in the words that follow: “Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country,” that is, Nazareth. It was a scornful challenge for Him to perform miracles in Nazareth as He had done elsewhere, and thus save Himself from ridicule.

Luke 4:24 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.”

The Lord replied by stating a deep-rooted principle in human affairs: great men are not appreciated in their own neighborhood.

He then cited two pointed incidents in the OT where prophets of God were not appreciated by the people of Israel and so were sent to Gentiles. When there was a great famine in Israel, Elijah was not sent to any Jewish widows—though there were plenty of them—but he was sent to a Gentile widow in Sidon. And although many lepers were in Israel when Elisha was ministering, he was not sent to any of them. Instead he was sent to the Gentile Naaman, captain of the Syrian army.

Imagine the impact of Jesus’ words on Jewish minds. They placed women, Gentiles, and lepers at the bottom of the social scale. But here the Lord pointedly placed all three above unbelieving Jews! What He was saying was that OT history was about to repeat itself. In spite of His miracles, He would be rejected not only by the city of Nazareth but by the nation of Israel. He would then turn to the Gentiles, just as Elijah and Elisha had done.

Luke 4:28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

The people of Nazareth understood exactly what He meant. They were infuriated by the mere suggestion of favor being shown to Gentiles.

Bishop Ryle comments: Man bitterly hates the doctrine of the sovereignty of God which Christ had just declared. God was under no obligation to work miracles among them.

Luke 4:29 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.

The people thrust Him out of the city ... to the brow of the hill, intending to throw Him down over the cliff.

Doubtless this was instigated by Satan as another attempt to destroy the royal Heir.

But Jesus miraculously walked through the crowd and left the city. His foes were powerless to stop Him. As far as we know, He never returned to Nazareth.

A Man with an Evil Spirit

Luke 4:31 Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths.

Since the elevation of Capernaum is six hundred fifty feet below sea level, Jesus had to go down from the higher elevations of southern Galilee. Christ taught several Sabbaths in their synagogue on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Luke 4:32 And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.

This statement characterizes all of Christ's teaching ministry (cf. Mt 7:28–29). Such words, supported by miraculous works, should have produced faith on the part of all.

Most religious leaders, however, rejected His claims, and most common people followed Him for the wrong reasons.

Luke 4:33 Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, :34 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

First He went to the synagogue and there met a man with an unclean demon.

The adjective unclean is often used to describe evil spirits; it means that they themselves are impure and that they produce impurity in the lives of their victims.

The reality of demon possession is seen in this passage. First there was a cry of terror—"Let us alone!" Then the spirit showed clear knowledge that Jesus was the Holy One of God who would eventually destroy the hosts of Satan.

Luke 4:35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.

Jesus issued a twofold command to the demon, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" The demon did so, after throwing the man to the ground but leaving him unharmed.

Luke 4:36 Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." :37 And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

The people were amazed! What was different about the words of Jesus that unclean spirits obeyed Him? What was that indefinable authority and power with which He spoke? No wonder the reports about Him spread throughout the surrounding region!

All the physical miracles of Jesus are pictures of similar miracles He performs in the spiritual realm. For instance, the following miracles in Luke convey these spiritual lessons:

Casting out unclean spirits (4:31–37)—deliverance from the filth and defilement of sin.

Healing Peter's mother-in-law of fever (4:38, 39)—relief from the restlessness and debility caused by sin.