

### Back to Luke

- ◆ Last, week we discussed John chapters 3 and 4. Actually, we pretty much just covered John 3:1-8. However, we were supposed to cover both chapters of John. In John 3-4, there are two beautiful pericopes involving spiritual rebirth: Nicodemus and the woman at the well.
- ◆ Today, we switch back to Luke, beginning with Luke 4:14-32. Just a couple of notes:
  - We start in verse 14 of chapter 4.
    - a) The first 13 verses of chapter 4 cover the temptation of Christ (which was part of lesson 4).
    - b) Actually, Luke 4:14-32 is preceded by the baptism of Jesus (chapter 3) and the temptation of Christ. Both of those events occur before Christ begins His public ministry.
    - c) Luke 4:14-30 narrates the beginning of the the public ministry of Jesus according to Luke. Notice as well this is a step back narratively speaking from last week's lesson where we were post the beginning of the public ministry in John 3-4 (the public ministry of Jesus starts with Jesus cleansing the temple in John 2).
  - Having the selection end with verse 32 is a little bit strange. It looks to me that verses 31-32 are part of a paragraph from verse 31 to verse 37. So it makes sense to either end the selection at verse 30 or continue until verse 37. This may have to do with the odd punctuation of verse 30 in the King James Version. It ends the paragraph with a comma. After noticing that I am more sympathetic towards why the selection ends at verse 32 instead of 30 in the lesson.

### The Beginning of the Public Ministry

- ◆ Read Luke 4:14-15:

(14) And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. (15) And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.
- ◆ *What does it mean that Jesus “returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee?” Is this or how is this linked to the last two pericopes in Luke (the baptism of Jesus and His temptation)?*
  - a) *Does the power of the Spirit have reference to the last pericope (His temptation)? Does it suggest the power of the Spirit was needed to help him recover from the temptation experience?*
  - b) *Or is Luke referring to the nature of his return to Galilee? In this case what does it mean that Jesus “returned in power of the Spirit into Galilee?” If this is what is meant, are the last two stories (i.e., the baptism and of Jesus and His temptation) an important backdrop here?*

- ◆ In my view option b) is much more likely. Notice, the continuing theme of the Spirit in these narratives.
  - **The Baptism of Jesus:** “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (John 3:22).
  - **The Temptation of Christ:** “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” (Luke 4:1).
- ◆ *Why this continuing theme of the Spirit? Why is it important for us to know that the Spirit descended and filled Jesus and that He returned in the power of the Spirit? What does it tell us about Jesus’ relationship with the Spirit? How would you summarize the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ life?*
- ◆ *What does returning in the power of the Spirit imply?*
- ◆ Well, I think we can get some insight into this issue from Luke’s use of the word “power” (actually, Luke is using the underlying Greek Word: *δυναμις*, but you know what I mean).
  - a) Read Luke 4:36:
 

**(36)** And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.
  - b) Read Luke 5:17:
 

**(17)** And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.
- ◆ *How is Jesus’ teaching in the synagogues linked to the spread of his fame throughout the region? Did His teaching cause the fame or did His fame allow him to teach in the synagogues?*
  - I think this is an interesting question. John Nolland points out that the underlying Greek text, “makes clear that the synagogue ministry is the basis of the report, rather than itself arising subsequent to the spread of Jesus’ reputation.”<sup>1</sup> Thus he translates the two verses as,
 

**14)** Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report about him spread through the whole countryside. **(15)** He was teaching in their synagogues, being glorified by all.
  - *Suppose this is true. What should we learn from it?*
- ◆ *Is it important that Jesus began His ministry in the synagogues? Is it important that Luke and John record that the public ministry of Jesus starts in the synagogue and the temple respectively (please don’t worry about the factual tension here; its not really part of my question)?*

## Jesus Reads From Isaiah

<sup>1</sup>Nolland, John, 1989, Word biblical Commentary: Luke 1-9:20, Word Books, 184.

◆ Read Luke 4:16-21:

(16) And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. (17) And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. 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 hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;  
he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,  
to preach deliverance to the captives,  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty them that are bruised,

(19) To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

(20) And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. (21) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

◆ *Notes*

- This pericope is found in both Mark (6:1-6) and Matthew (13:53-58). Notice, that in both Mark and Matthew this pericope happens much later in the public ministry of Jesus.
- “Esaias” is the Greek form/translation of “Isaiah.” The scripture quoted seems to be a combination of Isaiah 61:2, Isaiah 58:6, and 61:12.
- The quotation of Isaiah is framed by a chiasm:

A He stood up to read (16).

B He was handed or given the scroll by the “chazzan” (17).

C He unrolled the scroll (17)

D He reads the scripture (18-19).

C’ He rolled up the scroll (20).

B’ He handed the scroll back to the “chazzan” (20).

A’ He sat down (20).

- *Chiasmus is fairly rare in the New Testament (at least it is much less frequent than in the Old Testament) so I am inclined to think that it is important that Luke used a chiastic structure here. However, I am struggling to find how it helps us understand the narrative better. Any Ideas?*
  - ◆ It does make Jesus’ actions quite deliberate. I think it does emphasize the He has total control of the situation. Maybe it is ironic that these pretty ordinary actions bracket such a wonderful and dramatic proclamation. In a chiasmus the key point is the center of the inverted arch (D). Thus, the scripture quoted is the most important part, and the outer parts of the arch are there to help us appreciate the climatic reading of the scripture. (Note: I thought the comments regarding the chiastic structure of these verses were far better than anything I came up with.)
  - ◆ Jesus stands up to read the scripture and then sits to comment. Is this an important detail? I think it may indicate a great respect for the scriptures as well as worship at the

synagogue. Luke's report is actually the first historical report of a synagogue service, but it seems to be accurate. Specifically, a person stood to read a scripture and then sat down to comment.<sup>2</sup>

◆ *Why did Jesus read these verses? What is the message and/or what are the themes discussed in these verses?*

- Importantly, the theme of the Spirit is continued. The first line of the poem is, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." This is a clearly a very important theme to Luke. He wants us to understand this about Jesus. He has gone out of his way to emphasize it.
- *In these verses is Jesus proclaiming himself as "the Messiah"*
- *The Spirit being upon Jesus gets linked with anointing? Is this important? Why?*
- *Notice, How many times the word "me" is used. Why? Is this important?*
- *Besides Jesus what other groups or type of people are mentioned throughout the verses?*
- *Why are the poor and the downtrodden important to the ministry of Jesus?*
- *What is meant "by the acceptable year of the Lord" phrase in verse 19? Notice, how this phrase is rendered in the NRSV:*

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

- *What is the year of the Lord's favor in the Old Testament (particularly for the poor)?*
- The word "favor" could be substituted with the word "grace." Thus, another way to translate the verse would be to say,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's grace.
- *Why would Jesus quote a scripture that mentions a Jubilee year? What are the possibilities?*
  - a) **Metaphor:** It is a metaphor or image for Jesus' ministry, life, and mission.
  - b) **Literal:** It is actually a Jubilee year.
- *What do you think of the metaphor of a Jubilee year? Do you think comparing the ministry of the Christ to a year/period of Jubilee is apt? Do you think it would have been a meaningful metaphor to the audience in the synagogue that day?*

◆ Note: I think there is a reasonable chance that Jesus read and commented on a larger text of scripture. Luke or the source he drew upon may only be summarizing the synagogue reading. I think this may be hinted at in verse 21:

(21) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Thinking of this as a summary of the reading can help explain why Isaiah 58:6 get conflated with Isaiah 61:1-2. Maybe originally Jesus quoted from both more extensively.

◆ Let's compare the scripture quoted by Jesus (as reported by Luke) to the actual text of Isaiah 61:1-4. Note Jesus quotes only from the first two verses, but the poem stretches through verse 4:

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<sup>2</sup>Nolland, John, 1989, Word biblical Commentary:Luke 1-9:20, Word Books.

(1) The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;  
because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;  
he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;  
(2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all that mourn;  
(3) To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,  
to give unto them beauty for ashes,  
the oil of joy for mourning,  
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
that they might be called trees of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.  
(4) And they shall build the old wastes,  
they shall raise up the former desolations,  
and they shall repair the waste cities,  
the desolations of many generations.

- ◆ *What do you think of the imagery here? Does any of the imagery used in these verse resonant with you? Does it remind you of themes or specific events in the gospels?*
- ◆ *What do you think about verse 3? Could it be applied to Jesus and His Ministry in the same way verses 1 and 2 are?*
- ◆ *What is verse 4 about? Does it give us a hint a the original context of this verse? Are there similarities between the original setting/application and the setting here in Luke?*
- ◆ *One of the differences between what Jesus quotes and the actual text of Isaiah is that Jesus doesn't actually quote all of verse 2. He only says, "[t]o proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD" and doesn't include "and the day of vengeance of our God." Is this an important omission (for Luke at least)?*
- ◆ I think it is important that Luke omitted the vengeance line. Clearly, Luke wants us to remember or focus on the Lord's grace as it is fulfilled through Christ Jesus.

### **The Synagogue Responds**

- ◆ Read Luke 4:22-30:  

(22) And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? (23) And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. (24) And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. (25) But I tell you

of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; **(26)** But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. **(27)** And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. **(28)** And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, **(29)** And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. **(30)** But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

- ◆ *In verse 22, how would you describe the synagogue's response to Jesus? Are they favorably inclined? Do they believe him? What do they mean when they ask, "Is not this Joseph's son?"*
- ◆ The response actually seems pretty favorable to me. They may be a bit surprised, but they refer to his words a gracious. Notice how the NRSV renders the verse:

**(22)** All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

Still, the "Is not this Joseph's son" question may have a bit of skepticism underlying it.

- ◆ *Given what seems to be a mostly favorable response by the audience, what do you make of Jesus' words in 23–27? Why does Jesus respond this way?*
- ◆ *Why does Jesus mean when He says, "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb?" Is this a prophecy or something else?*
- ◆ It could be a prophecy, but my reaction was that he was reading or he knew their thoughts. Publicly, they expressed favor, but they already wanted or were thinking that they needed proof (miracles).
- ◆ *Does the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself" echo or foreshadow imagery that we will see later in the gospel of Luke?*
- ◆ It certainly reminds me of Luke 23:33-35:

**(33)** And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. **(34)** Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. **(35)** And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

- ◆ *Why does Jesus mention the widow of Zerephath (note: Zerephath is the heart of Baal Worship during Elijah's day) that fed Elijah and Naaman the Syrian? Is there more than one possible reason?*
- ◆ Well, the obvious commonality (besides that they both have encounters with prophets) is that they both are gentiles. This raises at least a couple of possibilities:

- a) It is a foreshadowing that the gospel is going to be taken to the gentiles.
- b) It is almost a comforting message to the Jews. Jesus, will work with the gentiles, and the Jews will reject him (to me the language almost seems like it is inevitable that they will reject Him). But this does not indicate that He has forgotten them or ultimately rejected them. The Lord is still committed to Israel just like He was when His prophets (Elijah and Elisha) worked outside of Israel (with gentiles) in times past. In short: He will not forget Israel anymore than Elijah and Elisha did. Ultimately, I view this proclamation in a rather positive light; to me it expresses some of the same grace, favor, and hope we see in the Isaiah 61:1-2 quotation (I think the imagery is even more fitting given the post-exilic backdrop expressed in verse 4).<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ *In light of crucifixion foreshadowing in these verses, what should we make of, “(29) And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. (30) But he passing through the midst of them went his way?” Does that remind you of anything that happens at the end of gospels?*

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<sup>3</sup>I liked the discussion of this in, Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 932-933.