

Part 19 A Prophet in His Own Country (4:14-30)

• *Jesus returns to Galilee – his home base*

Luke passes over the early ministry of Jesus in Judea which is recorded in John 1:35–3:36 and which probably took place in about April to December, AD 30. In early AD 31 Jesus left Judea and travelled to Galilee. From John's Gospel we hear of some of the events on the journey ¹ and of the second miracle in Galilee ². Galilee will be Jesus' home base. The power of the Spirit rests on Him ³. He soon becomes well-known ⁴. His preaching was well received ⁵. Luke 4:16–30 brings forward an incident which Mark records as taking place later. Luke 4:23 shows that this story is not the first event in Jesus' Galilean ministry.

¹ John 4:1–46a

² John 4:46b–54

³ 4:14a

⁴ 4:14b

⁵ 4:15

• *The people of Nazareth's familiarity with Him prevented them from really taking Him seriously*

Jesus visited His home town in Nazareth ¹. He went there 'as His custom was' ², and He was invited to expound a passage of Scripture. Jesus read a passage from Isaiah ³ and applied it to Himself ⁴. At first the people were impressed ⁵. Yet Jesus went on to say that they were not really heeding what He was saying. They simply wanted Him to do some more miracles as they had heard He had done elsewhere ⁶. Their familiarity with Him was preventing them from really taking Him seriously ⁷.

¹ 4:16

² 4:16

³ 4:17

⁴ 4:18-21

⁵ 4:22

⁶ 4:23

⁷ 4:24

1. Danger of a superficial approach to Jesus' message

1. There is a danger of a superficial approach to Jesus which does not allow His Word to reach our hearts. People like religion. These people in Nazareth are in a synagogue! Religious people want God to help them materially, to watch over their health, to make life pleasant for them.

• *A message of Jubilee transformation*

But have they really understood Jesus? He is claiming that He Himself is uniquely empowered by the Spirit. He comes to fulfil the Scripture. The Old Testament is about Him. He has a message which will transform the lives of the poor, if they will heed it. It will heal broken hearts. It will release people from various kinds of bondage. It will open blind eyes. Jesus' ministry in Israel is in fact a 'day of Jubilee'. Luke 4:19 is echoing the language of the 'Jubilee year' in the Old Testament.

• *Yet all they want is to see some miracles*

Yet what they really want is to see some miracles. 'What we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here!'

2. They do not respond to what God really wants to do in their lives

2. They do not respond to what God really wants to do in their lives. The message is greater than they realise. A prophet is not welcome in his own town. Jesus' own people were not receiving Him. Sometimes God sends His gospel to those who have been total strangers to Him in the past. Gentiles received God's blessings more than Israelites in the days of Elijah ¹ and Elisha ². Jesus is not just a son of Nazareth; He is God's Saviour for the entire world including the Gentiles!

¹ 4:25-26

² 4:27

• *Transformation of both individuals and society*

Jesus' ministry is a 'Jubilee occasion'. He will transform individuals and He will transform society. He will forgive sins. He will abolish everything that holds back human liberty and joy and progress. He will provide food, shelter, clothes. The year of Jubilee! It is no wonder the people think this is marvellous preaching.

• *They failed to appreciate that God wanted to change people like them as a first step to changing society*

People like messages about society being changed and liberty introduced. Yet we do not always appreciate the way in which God works. Jesus changes society by changing people! These people of Nazareth are about to attempt to murder Jesus! 'Society' will not be changed unless people like them are changed! Jesus is preaching 'good news' to them. He is offering them spiritual release. Their blindness is spiritual. Their need is not purely social. The miracles Jesus performs are simply signs of Jesus' power and authenticity. These people from Nazareth need release from prison as much as anyone. They are experiencing oppression not just from the Romans but

from the power of sin in their own lives. The 'Jubilee' year in Israel provided for the restoration of freedom to all impoverished Israelites (see Leviticus 25:28). If he was a slave, his slavery came to an end. If he had lost land, he got his land back.

☞¹
Leviticus 25:28

• *Jesus stops mid sentence – salvation has arrived but not yet judgement*

Jesus stops mid-sentence. Isaiah 61:1–2 spoke of 'the Lord's favour' and 'the day of vengeance of our God'. But Jesus stopped in the middle of a sentence, and quite deliberately 'closed the book'! The prophecy of Isaiah included both salvation and judgement. Jesus was making an announcement. The day of salvation has arrived but the day of judgement has not!

• *Gentiles to be welcomed in this coming kingdom!*

Not all wrongs in society were **immediately** going to be put right. Personal salvation comes before justice chronologically. People have to be right at heart before society will be greatly changed. And they would have to welcome Gentiles in this coming kingdom of Jesus!

It was that point that they did not like. Receiving Gentiles? Never! They wanted miracles. 'Do what you did in Capernaum!' Jesus was offering a salvation that begins with new life coming to individuals, a salvation that would one day reach out and embrace Gentiles.

3. God's grace

• *For everyone*

3. **No one understands God's grace unless it is realised that it is on offer for everyone.** Strangers to grace are more likely to receive it than those who think they know God's grace already. God was merciful to the woman of Zarephath, of all places ☞¹ Elijah worked a miracle for a Syrian, and Jesus was likely to do something similar ☞².

☞¹ 4:25-26
☞² 4:27

4. Religion had not really touched their hearts

• *They were not ready for God's day of Jubilee*

4. **The people reveal that their religion had not really touched their hearts.** This kind of talk makes the people furious with rage ☞¹. These respectable synagogue-attendees want to murder Jesus ☞² by pushing Him over a cliff about three kilometres south-east of Nazareth. But Jesus passes through their midst and no one stops Him ☞³. His escape was itself a little miracle! Their supposed admiration of Jesus has not changed their hearts. They wanted a few miracles and they would like to see the Romans removed from their land. But God wanted to begin with them. While they had murder in their hearts, they were not ready for God's day of Jubilee.

☞¹ 4:28
☞² 4:29
☞³ 4:30

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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