

LUKE 4/14-44: Jesus begins his ministry

[The Ultimate Man > Heaven Invasion > Jesus & Holy Spirit power]

At last (after all the preparation) the main action begins!

This is the start of Jesus' Galilean tour of ministry (4/14 – 9/50). In keeping with his emphasis on mission,

Luke structures both his books around the expanding mission activity of Jesus / the early church.

Overview

v14-15 Summary introduction

v16-30 Jesus visits Nazareth

v31-37 The first featured deliverance

v38-39 The first featured healing

v40-41 The first of many general references to Jesus' healing and deliverance ministry

v42-44 Key aspects of his ministry exemplified

Key points

It was a ministry commissioned by God not himself (v18,43)

It consisted firstly of preaching and teaching good news / the good news of the kingdom (v15,21,31,43f)

It consisted secondly of performing miracles, especially of healing and deliverance (v14,23,35,39,40f)

It was thus a word and deed ministry (proclamation + demonstration of the coming of the kingdom – cf. herald)

It was a ministry made possible by the empowering of the Holy Spirit (v14,18)

It was a ministry sustained by his relationship (and time) with the Father (v42)

It was carried out under the Father's direction v the demands of the crowd (v42f)

It was a ministry that never settled but always moved on, always had the unreached in focus (v43f)

It was a ministry that persevered (v44)

“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (Jn 20/21): what a model for our ministry!

Summary introduction (v14-15)

Baptized in...full of...led by...in the power of the S: when resist temptation, fullness (control) of HS not diminished; indeed, may even be increased by the victorious exercise of spiritual warfare

Two common themes in Luke: [i] “news about him spread through the whole countryside” (1/65f, 2/17f, 4/37);

[ii] “everyone praised him” (2/47,52; 4/32,36)

Jesus visits Nazareth (v16-30)

Probably occurred much later in Jesus' ministry (Mw 13/53-58 in ch4-20, Mk 6/1-6 in ch1-10; cf. v23). Many of the OT prophets began their ministry with an account of their being commissioned by God to authenticate their utterances (e.g. Is 6, Je 1, Ek 1). Luke places Jesus' visit to Nazareth at the start because it was here that Jesus 'announced' his commission (v18). Luke wanted to present Jesus as the continuation of OT revelation.

v18f q Is 61/1f: The nature and purpose of Jesus' ministry (note differences with Isaiah, could extend q to v3)

'the poor': Luke's emphasis on the poor (cf. 6/20) / Jesus and his message being for those previously excluded

Significance not in 'year of favour' v 'day of vengeance' (this is standard OT lang: year of jubilee v day of the Lord) but in Jesus stopping before he gets to latter line: this is the time of God's favour (1/25,28,30,43; 2/14)

v21: clear Messianic claim (note: this was just the start of his 'preach' – he said much more)

v22-23: The meat of this passage lies in the explanation of the incongruity of Jesus' seemingly unnecessarily provocative answer (v23&f) to his audience's apparent favourable response to him (v22a). The answer to the 'riddle' lies in v22b: "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked." The atmosphere is electric, the moment is pivotal, the audience is rapt. Jesus expounds on Isaiah and they marvel at his grace and wisdom. Here is the potential for something huge. The Messiah is amongst them and has announced himself. But at the critical moment they see only an ordinary man, the local boy made good. They want to receive him but can't. They 'choke' on his claims. The moment is missed. Their attitude changes in consequence – and hence Jesus' answer.

v24-27: Jesus goes on to say this has always been the case – people miss the anointing in front of them (the moment/bearer of God's visitation) because they are looking for someone/something different. This means God goes somewhere else, uses someone else – often those whom we see as not suitable/qualified. Israel in Elijah and Elisha's day missed the opportunity of God's visitation because they failed to recognize and receive his messenger – just as the people were doing with Jesus here.

v28-30: Jesus implicit endorsement of Gentile salvation (Luke again!) offends his hearers Jewish sense of superiority. What a change of attitude (from v22a). Their prejudice causes them to forget all they felt before.

Lesson: What the response of Jesus' townspeople graphically shows us is that one cannot remain politely neutral about Jesus. Once you don't recognize and receive him for who he truly is, one can only [there is no other option, no middle ground] tend increasingly to despise, resist and persecute him – be offended by his claims about himself and his unpalatable teachings (one can only bear these when one accepts who he is).

If you want to develop this theme, you may find these notes from A Culture of Honour by Bill Johnson helpful:

Man of God in nation but not honoured for Spirit of God that chose to rest on him, not in a way that was equal to what he carried – able to end drought. Israel failed to learn the lesson of honour. In the absence of honour, God had to turn from his nation to another to display his nature of supernatural provision (to a Sidonian widow) and healing (to a Syrian general). God went outside the nation because there was no culture of honour to draw from a man what was in him, but faith in the widow and general put them in a place to receive what God was releasing. They recognized the Spirit of God was resting on a person, and they realized that if you honour the one God has honoured, it opens you up to receive from God on a new level.

What we receive is in equal measure to the honour we give. If we receive a prophet merely as a brother, we receive a brother's reward. To honour a prophet as a prophet

is the only way to have complete (legal) access to what that person carries in God (Mw 10/41).

We can be so close to our miracle but we don't receive it because we're looking for someone famous – there is no honour in my heart for what someone carries (cf. the 'unanswered' prayer of man caught in flood, despite logs, boats and helicopter). Many people have prayed for provision or healing but didn't receive it because they didn't recognize where the anointing was; they didn't have the ability to recognize the Spirit's presence on someone else.

The discerning of spirits is a seeing into the spiritual realm: recognizing that someone is carrying the Spirit in some way, and that we need to honour that to get access to everything they bring – learning to honour the one God has honoured with his presence. (E.g. how Johnsons' life changed when prayed for by 'blessed' couple in their church.) With the discerning of spirits you can recognize the Spirit of God on a person and realize they're carrying something, and that you need to honour them because God has honoured them.

I will have to learn to recognize him on others, because sometimes he will not allow me to sense him on myself; sometimes the only way I can sense him is to see him on others. This is a test of whether the Presence of God is truly my greatest treasure. Sometimes we don't want to honour others because we are jealous or insecure; because we are not getting the honour we think we deserve, we find it hard to give it to others. Story of Benni Johnson praying for Buddhists, Satanists and Israel – and 6 year-old's prophecy. You get out what you honour.

Can honour every person, even unbelievers (made in image of God, gift in them – note how an ungodly person creates beauty), those who've fallen (can honour because God's chosen to rest on them, without honouring sin – we think he rests on us because we're perfect!), and those we disagree with (in church and world). Can additionally honour every Christian (those the Spirit has chosen to rest on: be slow to criticize) and every church/stream (see the special/unusual grace on them). Jesus is so secure (filled with a heart of honour) that at the moment he most deserves honour, he honours others (e.g. centurion, Canaanite woman).

People's unbelief (lack of honour) can affect the corporate anointing (when things happen in a room beyond any person's ministry, they're not dependent on anybody) but not your personal anointing (released through the laying on of hands). Unbelief cannot stop the river flowing within you. This is what happened to Jesus in Naz.

We must also honour the answer to prayer that comes in seed form (see oak in acorn, rain in cloud the size of a man's hand). We can lose something because we fail to honour the answer that came in seed form. Most big prayers are answered immediately but in seed form (both 100% apple). God entrusts us with infant forms of revival and we say, 'This isn't revival?' He's entrusted us with the stewardship of the beginnings of a movement. Don't despise the day of small beginnings, don't abort the move; let's not see something that had the life of God in it stillborn. But God can resurrect it so it seems the move had no break.

The first featured deliverance (v31-37)

Jesus amazes people (v32,36 cf. 2/18)

Such a clear picture of proclaiming kingdom (v31f) => demonstrating kingdom (v33ff)

A demon-possessed man – in the church! (v33a)

Demonized people often act in a socially unacceptable way – without realizing it (v33b)

Demons know (v34): [i] who Jesus is (“Holy One” cf. 1/35 – 9 out of 10 previous revelations about Jesus have

come from angels!); [ii] their future (“have you come to destroy us”)[possessed = possessing: “He” v “us”]

Jesus has authority in word and deed, teaching and miracles (v32,36)

Simplicity of the deliverance (v complex manuals today). First silenced, then cast out. Note strong words and

“stern” expression; “he gives orders.” Immediately and totally delivered.

N.B. The deliverance was seen as part of the teaching! (v35 cf. v36) The demonstration was as much part (as

necessary a part) of the teaching (doctrine/truth – e.g. of the kingdom) as the proclamation. Jesus’ teaching

had credibility because it was backed-up by action; and both together authenticated his commission (v18).

“Authority and power” (v36): the right to do something v the ability to do something
“News...spread” theme (v37 cf. v14) – when God is working like this, you don’t have to do much publicity

The first featured healing (v38-39)

(Fellowshipping in homes after meetings is as old as the faith!)

Why God heals? – in many of the featured healings in the gospels, we can identify one or more answers to the ?

Here: because he is asked + so we can wait on him

Note again the simplicity, efficacy and immediacy of the ministry/healing (every time with Jesus)

He rebuked the sickness (as he did the demon) and it left (one of various ways in which J prayed for the sick)

The first of many general references to Jesus’ healing and deliverance ministry (v40-41)

Jesus healed/delivered many more people than those whose stories are told (Jn 20/30, 21/25)

Repeatedly in the Gospels we are just told of a large number of healings that took place at a particular time

There are just as important for a theology of healing and for building faith as the featured healings. Here note: Jesus was willing to give of himself despite a long day of meetings and people (and being in a ‘private’ setting)

We can bring the sick to Jesus (to meetings where he is) – Jesus heals when/because the sick are brought to him

No sickness is incurable to Jesus (“all who had various kinds of sickness)

[others asked / others brought]^

Another way Jesus prays for the sick (“laying his hands on” – didn’t do this in v39: don’t lock into formula)

Everyone who was brought was prayed for *and* healed (“and laying his hands on *each one*, he healed them”)

Some of the sicknesses were caused by demon-possession (as these sick came to him, the demons left)

Again, the demons knew his identity: “the Son of God” (what the angel had said in 1/35!)(again they shout)

He rebuked the demons just as he had rebuked Peter’s mother-in-law’s fever

He silenced them as he had the demon in the synagogue (v35) – even though they were telling the truth!

Jesus is the Christ: the demons add their witness to that of the angel, the glory, the prophet, the Father, the line!

Key aspects of his ministry exemplified (v42-44)

Jesus daily devotional/relational time with the Father (note time and place)

Jesus ruled by the Father and his mission, not the crowds or popularity

 Governed by call, not expectation, pressure or need

 How futile to try to get Jesus to do something that’s not going to do! (motive possibly sincere – but selfish)

The Ultimate Man...Invades from Heaven:

The King has come! (the long-awaited Messiah-King, the Christ)

The Kingdom has come! (the good news of the kingdom of God – i.e. that it has come)

Sickness and demons are cast out (they have no presence in the kingdom, under the rule of God)

There is also mental and emotional healing and wholeness from God’s Servant in this time of favour

Jesus and HS power:

Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, then and now, heals the sick, delivers the demonized, brings us into his kingdom

Ministry: physical healing, mental/emotional healing, deliverance

Appeal: filled with Spirit => minister in power of Spirit; don’t keep Jesus to yourself – go through all the towns

Gospel: respond to God in the time of his favour; recognize/receive who is amongst us – don’t miss the moment