

LESSON 13

JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH

In Luke 4, Luke, the physician, relates an account of the type of rejection Jesus faced during His three-year ministry. It is sad, because Jesus was rejected in the place where He grew up. He may have gone to school, worshipped, and worked with many of the men that were present on this occasion.

Verse 16 says that it was His custom to go to the synagogue on the sabbath. There, in that assembly, Jesus was given the book of Isaiah to read. What a wonderful example our Lord set for us. Is it our custom to attend the worship every first day of the week as commanded in the New Testament (Hebrews 10:25)?

Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2. *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD”* This beautiful text is obviously the plan for Jesus’ ministry. Look at what Isaiah says will be the Messiah’s accomplishments.

First, He is going to bring good news to the poor. These people were poor because they have not been introduced to the hope of heaven through Christ. Jesus will provide that through the establishment of His church and an encouraging offer for them to become a part of it.

Second, He would bind up the brokenhearted. The expression “binding up” is Isaiah’s way of saying Jesus would provide “healing”. That is something Jesus certainly did as He would comfort those with all types of problems.

Third, He would give liberty to the captives. The Jews were in a type of captivity under Roman rule, but they were under a greater captivity in the bondage of sin. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection would provide an escape from that bondage.

Fourth, He would open the prison to those who were bound. We know that later, many of the Jews would be persecuted, thrown in prison, and even killed. But their prison of sin was much greater, and Jesus would give them release from that prison with salvation.

Finally, He would proclaim an acceptable year or a year of acceptance. The Lord would, during a space of time, accept those who repented of their sin and followed His instructions for obedience to God the Father. This doesn't mean Isaiah was saying that there was only one year in which to repent. "Year" represents a period of time, and that period of time is not specified.

At the end of the reading, Jesus closed the book and returned it to the attendant, or the person in charge, and sat down. This was the usual place and position for the designated speaker. The people would sit or stand, the men on one side; and the women on the other.

Every eye was on Jesus. When He spoke, He relayed a shocking truth, "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" He tells them that He is the one of whom Isaiah spoke, and He is going to make all of those things come true. Their response was typical. They begin to ask one another if this is not Joseph's son, the carpenter, the common laborer that they knew well. They must have looked at Him in disbelief and even contempt. How ridiculous that a carpenter's son could be the fulfillment of such an honored prophet.

Jesus then quoted a proverb. It is not one recorded in Scripture, but must have been a common Jewish proverb. Jesus, seeing their reaction to His telling them that He is the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy, quotes this proverb. "*'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.*" We need to think about what this would mean to these Jews of Nazareth. The proverb conveys the idea that a man attempts to heal another man of an illness, yet he has the same illness. He should first heal himself before he tries to heal others. This way, he would be worthy of the attention and confidence from those watching this unfold.

Jesus had apparently not performed miracles in Nazareth, and they had only heard about the miracles people claimed He had done in Capernaum. They wanted to see some of those miracles; they wanted evidence. Jesus did not accommodate them. Instead, He quoted another proverb, "*No prophet is acceptable in his hometown.*" Though the Jews probably took this as meaning He would not be accepted in Nazareth, He was probably referring to a great audience, the Jewish nation. What a sad admission from the Messiah that He wouldn't be accepted by His own people.

Jesus doesn't need a scroll from the Old Testament to relate historical information to His audience. He relates events from their history that would have surely heard repeated many times. He tells them of the famine during the days of Elijah, the

prophet. He emphasizes the suffering of the widows during this time, and the widow to whom Elijah was sent (First Kings 9). He also mentions the healing of the leper, Naaman, the Syrian, by Elisha (Second Kings 5). These two reminders said to the Jews that Jesus was putting the Gentile, the Syrian, and the Zidonian in equal position with them. That is why the telling of these stories infuriated the people. Verse 28 says they “were filled with wrath”. They took hold of Jesus and threw Him out of the city with plans to throw Him from a cliff about 40 feet high.

Somehow, Jesus was able to pass Himself among the angry crowd and escape. There is no indication that this was a miracle. Possibly His quiet demeanor allowed Him to slip out among them.

Keep in mind that this happened on the Sabbath Day. The place they took Him was about two miles from Bethlehem, so they would have violated the limits of a sabbath day’s journey in taking Him outside the city.

Jesus knew that He would no longer be welcome in His own city, and He left to spend time in Capernaum.

FOR DISCUSSION: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE LESSON?

1. Why did Jesus say, “No prophet is acceptable in his hometown”?
2. How does the attitude of the Jews about the Gentiles, Syrian, and the Zidonian compare with our feelings today about different races?
3. Discuss how there may be times when the reaction of others to the truth may result in our having to admit that there are some people who will never accept the gospel.
4. Discuss how difficult it sometimes is to teach our own family the truth.