



## **Study 5 - Luke 4: 14 - 30**

### **The Announcement of the Messiah (in his home town)**

We start off this study with a question to get everyone talking about themselves.

Question 1:       Where was your hometown? What was, or is, memorable about it?

Now we read Luke chapter 4:14 to 23.

Nazareth was the hometown of Jesus, where he grew up. It was a small village in the middle of the province of Galilee, mainly of Galileans but including some Jews from the far away province of Judea. The people of Galilee were often of mixed ancestry so there is likely to have been considerable antagonism between them and the purer blooded Judean Jews who regarded themselves as the only proper Jews. As a result Judean Jews of Nazareth, as the family of Jesus were, were most probably foreigners in their own community. The two slightly different peoples were probably not friendly to each other. That, not the best of places, was where Jesus spent most of his childhood days!

Luke uses the story of what happened when Jesus read from the OT book of Isaiah in the synagogue there, to start explaining how we are to understand the ministry of Jesus. Jesus had to deal with a strong expectation among ordinary people that the Messiah would behave in certain ways. He had a major job to change that expectation.

Jesus read just one and a half verses from Isaiah 6. We will read more verses to get the context of what he read. We may assume his listeners knew the passage well so that hearing the verses he read they would

immediately remember the following verses. Listen carefully to the picture these verses give.

Isaiah 61: 1 – 7.

Question 2: What would those verses have made them think Jesus was going to do if he really was the Messiah? What would they have been expecting him to call on them to do?

Like many of the other passages in the Old Testament that talk about the Messiah these verses would have made them expect leadership in a successful military campaign against the Romans. Brothers, called the Maccabees, had led Israel against the Syrians 200 years earlier with great success. If he succeeded the men would expect to have to join his army. Of course, we know that such a venture would have been hopeless. The Roman armies were exceedingly difficult to beat. Only the most warlike of peoples in other parts of the Empire had any success against them, and then not for very long.

Question 3: The next half verse in Isaiah to the one Jesus read says 'and the day of vengeance of our God'. He stopped without reading that out. What would that have suggested to the people who listened to him?

I think they would have found it a great puzzle, which is why they listened to what he said next so carefully. He seemed to be promising that he would be a mighty spiritual leader but not a war leader. They would have thought of 'the day of vengeance' as the day when their God would bring the world they knew to an end with the defeat of the hated Romans.

Next we read Luke 4:24 – 30

Question 4: Jesus went on to remind them of the stories of the widow of Zarephath and Elijah (1 Kings 17: 2 – 10a the brook Kerith was east of Jericho, Zarephath was the other side of Israel near Sidon, a Phoenician city) and of Naaman and Elisha (2 Kings 5: 1, Aram was another name for Syria ). Why did Jesus do that? What point was he making, apart from the obvious one of 'not in my hometown'?

All these places were outside Israel. He was saying that as they rejected him he was going to go to other people outside Israel. They did not like that idea at all. Quite why he did that is a bit of a mystery.

Question 5: If a politician, wanting to influence people and starting off an election campaign was nearly lynched - murdered by a mob – as Jesus was he would not be likely to get on very well. The story does not give a good impression of Jesus. Why does Luke tell us about this episode when he could so easily not have done so? What is it about the ministry of Jesus that Luke wants us to think about?

Luke is expecting what he writes to be read mainly by Gentiles – Romans. He has emphasised that the 2 great prophets Elijah and Elisha helped Gentiles. Christian faith is for all peoples, not any special nation or people group. Probably the fact that Jesus was rejected by the Jews like this made him sound better to a Roman, like Theophilus! But, above and beyond that, Luke will have chosen this episode because it gives such a clear picture of what Jesus was going to do in his ministry.

Question 6: It says, "Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on his way". What does that suggest?

It tells us that Jesus had an unusual air of authority about him. Perhaps too, that angels protected him.

Question 7: Looking now at the whole story – what 2 things is Jesus emphasising by what he says and does that are of fundamental importance in our understanding of God and of faith?

He has appealed to the Scriptures of the Old Testament to establish who he is. And the Scripture he read emphasised the work of the Spirit both for preaching and healing. These are the 2 fundamental sources for our understanding too – the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit - though we have, of course, the tremendous advantage of having the writings of the New Testament as well as those of the Old.