

The Gospel According to Luke

“Jesus Jubilee”
Chapter 4:14-30

Introduction

“Jubilee” is a word we need to become familiar with if we are to fully appreciate Jesus’ first sermon in Luke. Among the Jews, every seventh year was a Sabbath year in which they were to let their land rest by not planting their crops. The year following every seven times seven years, every fiftieth year, was the Year of Jubilee. During this semi-centennial celebration, the land was to rest and no crops were planted; all mortgaged property reverted back to its original ownership; all debts were remitted; and all who were slaves were set free.

Jesus took the scroll and read a passage from Isaiah. It was a passage well-known to His audience. It very obviously described a Year of Jubilee, also called “[the acceptable year of the Lord.](#)” But the Jews had come to understand that the Jubilee in the Isaiah passage was a very special one. It wasn’t simply a year-long celebration, after which they would return to their normal life. It described the coming of their Messiah to establish the kingdom of God on earth – to establish an endless Jubilee of the Jews.

Jesus read the text and took a dramatic pause; all eyes were upon Him. Then He said, “**Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**”

Jubilee was here! The Messiah had come! The Kingdom was at hand! Jubilation ought to have been the response... Curiously, it was not. Homicide was the response – or at least attempted homicide, as they sought to throw Jesus off the cliff.

The Jews missed their Jubilee. Jesus indicated His invitation would expand beyond Israel to the Gentiles. It did; and “**today**” you are still being invited to enter your own personal, spiritual Jubilee in a relationship with Jesus.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 "Today" You Can Choose To Celebrate Jubilee With Jesus, or #2 "Today" You Can Show Contempt For Jubilee With Jesus.

#1 "Today" You Can Choose
To Celebrate Jubilee With Jesus
(v14-21)

We left Jesus in the wilderness. Between defeating the devil and His return to Nazareth, a great many things occurred:

1. He performed His first miracle at a wedding in Cana by turning water into wine.
2. He went to the Temple in Jerusalem and overturned the tables of the moneychangers for the first time.
3. He met with Nicodemus and told him he must be born-again to enter the kingdom of heaven.
4. He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well.
5. He healed a nobleman's son.

These events, and some others, are recorded by John in His gospel, in chapters one through four. Luke only summarizes by saying (in verses fourteen and fifteen),

Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

Luke 4:15 And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

Jesus did many amazing things; Luke emphasized that "He taught in their synagogues." We are too quickly distracted by the miraculous and can forget the power in God's Word as it is simply taught. If teaching was Jesus' emphasis, it ought to be ours as well.

Jesus "returned in the power of the Spirit." Everything Jesus did involved the Holy Spirit. Luke constantly brings this out to encourage you. Jesus was and is God; but He was acting as a Man submitted to God, refusing to use His own power. Thus He becomes an example of what God can do through any man or woman who submits to God and is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:16 So 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 to read.

The Temple at Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life. When the Jews were exiled and could not worship at the Temple, they established local synagogues. Anyplace there were at least ten male Jews, there was a synagogue meeting on the Sabbath day.

There's a phrase here that really caught my attention: "as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day..." Jesus attended synagogue every Saturday of His life. It's the equivalent of our going to Church every week.

A lot of believers don't regularly attend Church... **But Jesus did!** I've heard a lot of complaints over the years about why folks don't attend Church; things like, "*The message was boring*"; or, "*I just don't get anything out of it*"; or, "*I've heard it all before.*"

Could you even imagine having Jesus in your service? If there was ever a Person Who would be bored by your message... Or didn't get anything out of it... Or had heard it all before... **It was the Lord!** His example of faithful attendance puts any and all excuses to shame. You don't just go to Church for you, or your family; you go for God.

Jesus "stood up to read." It might help if we understood the order of service in the synagogue. It went something like this:

1. They would sing from the Psalms.
2. They would recite Deuteronomy 6:4-9, a passage called the *Shema*.
3. Scripture would be read, first a passage from Genesis through Deuteronomy; then a passage from one of the prophets.
4. Then there would be a word of instruction – what we call teaching.
5. The service would end with the pronouncing of the famous benediction from Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

If there was a visiting teacher, he would be called upon to read the portion from the prophets and give instruction. Having heard all Jesus had done in Galilee, the hometown crowd was anxious to hear from Him.

Luke 4:17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

Luke 4:18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,*

Because He has anointed Me

To preach the gospel to the poor;

He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives

And recovery of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

Luke 4:19 *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

We can't be sure if this was the regular reading for that Sabbath, or if Jesus “found” the portion Himself. It's likely that it was the regular reading for that day – an amazing providence that the Holy Spirit brought Jesus to the synagogue on that particular day. It is often true today that the Holy Spirit brings just the right message at just the right time.

The audience recognized the passage as describing a very special Jubilee “year of the Lord.” It was describing the coming of their Messiah to establish a kingdom on earth. They also had heard that Jesus had been performing things like those listed in Isaiah's description. They were peaked and excited. What would Jesus say?

Luke 4:20 Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

Scripture was always read standing; then the teacher would sit down to give his instruction.

Luke 4:21 And He began to say to them, **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

Whoa! No one expected that! Isaiah's speaker was **“the anointed One.”** He was the Messiah, upon Whom would rest the Spirit. When Jesus said the Scripture was fulfilled, He was unmistakably claiming to be the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

The Jews were an oppressed people, subjected to the Roman government. They understood their Messiah would come and fulfill Isaiah's words; but they assumed He would first have to deliver them from the Romans politically and militarily. In other words, they did not see how Jubilee could come until Rome was gone. Jesus plainly stated that the deliverance, the liberty, the Jubilee of these verses was immediately **“fulfilled in [their] hearing.”**

The Jews knew Jubilee had a symbolic meaning; but they didn't realize it had a deeper, spiritual meaning. It wasn't *political* liberty they needed, but *personal* liberty; they didn't need to be set free from Rome as much as from their own sin.

To summarize Isaiah, they were **“poor,” “blind” “captives”** who were **“oppressed”** and **“brokenhearted.”**

1. Everyone is **“poor.”** You have no currency, nothing of value, by which you may obtain salvation.
2. Everyone is **“blind.”** You were born spiritually dead and into a world of spiritual darkness.
3. Everyone is held **“captive.”** You inherited a sin nature and, to some greater or lesser extent, are a slave to your selfishness.
4. Thus are you **“oppressed and brokenhearted.”** *Oppression* is external; *brokenheartedness* is internal. Outwardly, life makes no sense; it presses in on you with its afflictions and adversities. Inwardly you are empty and alone, sensing there is something more but not able to discover it on your own.

Then Jesus comes! You hear **“the gospel”** and are set free from sin and selfishness to serve your Creator. You become rich in faith; your eyes are opened to spiritual truth; your heart is mended, and your circumstances put into heavenly perspective. You experience your own, **personal** Jubilee with Jesus! It doesn't last a year, or a thousand years; it lasts for eternity.

The gospel is the most acceptable message you will ever hear. But it is also rejectable.

#2 **“Today”** You Can Show
Contempt For Jubilee With Jesus
(v22-30)

The people who heard this first, short sermon rejected Jesus:

Luke 4:22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

The sentence makes a comparison. On the one hand, Jesus was well-known to them, having grown-up among them. On the other hand, His words were anointed with the grace and power of God.

What finally swayed them to reject the Lord? They were not so interested in *words* as they were in *works*:

Luke 4:23 He said to them, **“You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’”**

Luke 4:24 Then He said, **“Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.”**

Though raised in Nazareth, Jesus had set-up headquarters in Capernaum. He did many mighty works there. There was a kind of jealous resentment in Nazareth.

“Physician, heal yourself” was a popular first century saying the Jews used to challenge someone to live up to their hype. In Jesus’ case, they wanted Him to perform the works they had heard of – like the healing of the nobleman’s son, or the turning of water into wine.

When Jesus said, **“no prophet is accepted in his own country,”** it had a little more sting than it does for us. It referred to the well-documented fact that the Jews often rejected their prophets in the generation in which they ministered. Oh, they might respect Isaiah in the first century; but back in his own time, tradition has it that their ancestors put him in a hollow tree trunk and sawed him in half!

We sometimes quote the phrase to indicate that our ministry is not appreciated or recognized. God can use anyone; but sometimes it bothers us when He does! Someone younger than us, with less life

experience; or someone different from us. We need to look for the evidence of God's supernatural empowering in a person's life and not be blinded by our own natural judgment.

Jesus referred His hearers to a couple of Old Testament incidents:

Luke 4:25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land;

Luke 4:26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region of Sidon*, to a woman *who was a widow*.

Luke 4:27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

Elijah and Elisha were among the most respected prophets among the first century Jews. But in their own time, the Jews were a disobedient people. The two episodes recalled are great stories to study in and of themselves; but their importance here is that God sent Elijah and Elisha to minister outside of Israel, to the Gentiles. Jesus used them to illustrate that, if the Jews rejected Him as their Messiah, God would send Him beyond Israel to the Gentiles.

The Jews did reject Jesus. Not just the Jews in His hometown of Nazareth; the nation officially rejected Him. God then sent the gospel out beyond Israel to the Gentiles – a work that continues to this very day.

Luke 4:28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Luke 4:29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.

Exposing hearts is a dangerous business! The gospel message is intense and it calls for a decision. You cannot remain neutral. You must accept Jesus; if you don't, you reject Him. You may seem more civilized in your rejection than these Jews at Nazareth, but it amounts to the same thing. He offers life and you, if you reject Him, are part of the crowd of humanity seeking to push Him away.

Luke 4:30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

I'm not sure if this was natural or supernatural. It is an interesting phrase, though, because I think Jesus still does this when the gospel is preached. He “[passes through the midst](#)” of the audience. He's there, in their midst, giving opportunity for them to be saved and set free.

Jesus is acceptable; but He is also rejectable. Now would be a good time to point out a fascinating fact about Jesus' reading from Isaiah. The passage is Isaiah 61:1 & 2. Here is how it reads in the Book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
Isaiah 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,

Did you notice anything different? Jesus quit reading and closed the scroll after He said, “[to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.](#)” *But the verse was not over!* It continued, saying “[and the day of vengeance of our God.](#)”

Jesus stopped at the comma. It is one of the most important commas ever used! It represents over two thousand years. Jesus declared that His coming inaugurated “[the acceptable year of the Lord.](#)” He was referring to His first coming to be the Savior of the world by dying on the Cross at Calvary. From that time until now, we are still living in “[the acceptable year of the Lord](#)” – the time of gospel preaching in which you may accept the Lord and experience personal, spiritual Jubilee.

There is also coming “[the day of vengeance of our God.](#)” We know it as the Great Tribulation, followed by Jesus' Second Coming to earth. “[Today](#)” will end and be followed by a tomorrow of terrible judgment upon the earth that culminates with the Lord's return.

Conclusion

You and I live in a time of spiritual Jubilee. We can experience its joy by accepting Jesus Christ.

Let me say a word to you who have accepted Him: Is your life jubilant? If it isn't, perhaps you've allowed yourself to be taken captive by something; or are nursing a broken heart by yourself, without the Lord's help; or you are trusting in material things, not realizing your poverty of faith. It could be for any number of reasons. Ask the Lord to show you.

If you've never accepted Jesus, then you are actively rejecting Him. You are seeking to push Him away and remain hidden in the crowd. He's walking by you; take hold of Him.