

(Luke 4:14~21)

Following his 40-day temptation in the wilderness, Jesus returned to the region of Galilee, and began preaching the message of the kingdom. According to Luke, Jesus quickly grew in notoriety, famous in a sense for his teachings, and very likely performed some miracles. The account given here is somewhere around 6 months or longer since his return from the wilderness. Apparently this is his first time teaching in his home synagogue. Luke tells us, that at the time appointed for the reading of the scripture for that day, Jesus stood up and a scroll was handed to him by the minister of the Nazareth synagogue, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Now the letters in Jesus day were not broken down into chapters or verses as ours, they were just one long continuous letter. But to help us identify where he was reading, he began what we would refer to as Isaiah 62:1~2.

Turn with me to Isaiah 61...¹*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD...*

After he had read the passage, he handed the scroll back to the minister, and sat down... This was the manner in which rabbi's would teach, they would stand for the reading of the word, in honor and reverence, then the teacher would sit down, and explain the passage to the people. The passage we just read here, was going to be the text for that morning's sermon.

Now no doubt, Isaiah chapter 61, was a very familiar chapter to those gathered there listening, for it was one of several "*Messianic*" passages, that often cited by the rabbis, to bring hope and comfort to the people, especially during times of oppression. The entire chapter given to the person and work of the Messiah, speaking of the blessings he would bring to his people and how he would deliver them from the hands of the enemy. It was a very inspirational chapter, reminding them of God's deliverance and restoration he would bring to the nation Israel. Given that Isaiah spoke this prophecy during the Babylonian captivity period, no doubt it was a welcome breath of fresh air, giving strength and hope in the midst of despair.

Now I want you to notice something very interesting about the section Jesus read for his text... Even when you consider the scripture he was reading was not broken down into chapters and verses, it's obvious that he stopped reading in *mid sentence*...

²*To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and **the day of vengeance of our God**; to comfort all that mourn;*

Why did He stop? Why did he not finish out the thought in that passage?

The answer is, He was revealing a mystery that had been hidden from Israel since the beginning of time... Hidden from Israel, was the fact that "*The Messiah*" would make TWO VISITS to the world. They interpreted this passage in the context of one visit. When they would read verse 2, they saw it as speaking of the same time; they saw it as a day of salvation for the nation Israel, but a day of reckoning, a day of judgment for their enemies!

Now, that is the way this particular passage *had been taught* in the synagogues for years... From the time it was given to Israel, up to Jesus' day, (700-800 years). That explains why Jesus was first received by much of the people when they heard his claims of being the Messiah. The nation was then under the control of Rome, and welcomed the thought of the coming of the promised Messiah. But acceptance soon turned to rejection, when Jesus message of love and mercy to your enemies began to resonate. Rather than

a call for the armies of Israel to come together and retaliate against Rome, and overthrow the Roman government and take back Israel, Jesus called the people to submit to Rome, to show love and compassion to their enemies. Something that was unthinkable and out of the question in the orthodox Jewish mind. What had started out, with a warm welcome, followed by multitudes, quickly turned ugly, with the result of Him eventually being rejected by His own people, and crucified for claiming to be the “*Messiah*.”

Listen, for thousands of years, the nation Israel had been expecting the arrival of Messiah, God’s promised deliverer. But their understanding was incomplete, for they thought that when He came, he would come as a conquering king, and overthrow the current regime that had taken over their land, utterly destroying the nations enemies, setting them free of oppression and restoring the nation back to it’s previous glory. But that is not how it would be...

While reading his text for that morning’s sermon, Jesus stops after saying... “*To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*”...because this would describe the purpose of his first visit! The purpose of His first coming was a time to proclaim “*the acceptable year of the Lord*,” the good news of God’s grace and forgiveness to all who will come! Beloved, that day in that Jewish synagogue, Jesus announced the dawning of a “*New Era*,” it was the beginning of the “*acceptable year of the Lord*.” This present time we are living in is known as the Grace period, the day of salvation! Beginning back in this Jewish synagogue, and continuing until Jesus comes back, is a time when God offers mercy and grace to sinners!

Paul refers to this in 2 Co 6... ¹*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* ²*(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

Beloved, we are living in the “*acceptable year of the Lord*”... The time when men and women are accepted of God, regardless of their spiritual condition. It is a time when God offers forgiveness of sins and receives all who come to Him.

But it’s important to understand, time is running out! This period of Grace will not last forever, rest assured, there’s coming a day of judgment, a day of wrath. The rest of the statement, “*the day of vengeance of the Lord*” he will fulfill when Christ returns. It is for this reason that Jesus stopped reading after “*the acceptable year of the Lord*,” because that would be at a later time. But for now, it would be a time of Grace!

Having made that distinction clear, turn back to the book of Luke, and look at our passage this morning. ¹⁸*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,* ¹⁹*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord...*

Jesus declares that “HE” has come in fulfillment of this passage, declaring that He has come to announce the beginning of the “*acceptable year of the Lord*.” To fully appreciate what He is saying here is to understand that by that statement, he is alluding to the “*Hebrew/Jewish, Year of Jubilee*,” also known as the “*Year of Liberty*,” something that took place every fifty years, in the life of the nation Israel.

To correctly understand it, I got to go back its roots, which starts with what is known as a “*Sabbatical Year*.” Upon entering the land of Canaan, the Lord issued a commandment to the nation Israel that required them to observe what was called a “*Sabbatical Year*.” The commandment required that every seven years, they were to let the land “*rest*.” Meaning they were not to work the ground that year, but rather let it rest. Given that the Sabbath day is a “*Day of rest from labor*,” thus we have the term “*Sabbatical year*.” In helping to make this possible, the Lord promised that in the sixth year, He would bless their crops to produce enough to make up for the year of rest.

So every seventh year, they would let the ground rest. Now, after *seven sabbaticals*, (or forty-nine years) they were to celebrate the fiftieth year as the “*Year of Jubilee*,” also called the “*Year of Liberty*.” It was a special year in which to “*proclaim liberty throughout the land.*” (**Leviticus 25:10, which is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia**)

In this year, all debts were to be cancelled, all slaves were to be freed, property was to be returned to its original owner. Individuals, who had incurred debts and had sold themselves as slaves or servants to others, were released from their debts and set at liberty. Since all the land belonged to God, land could not be sold, but it could be lost to another for reason of debt. In the year of Jubilee, the land was returned to the original owners. It was a time of the cancellation of debts, getting rid of burdens; it was a time of restoration. Being every 50 years, usually every person had the opportunity to begin a new, a fresh start.

Given that, Israel knew that Isaiah’s prophecy was one of great blessing! In Isaiah 61, the prophet was describing the Messiah’s visit as like the “*Year of Jubilee*,” it would be a time of great rejoicing and restoration for the nation. Their land would be returned to them, they would build up what had been torn down, setting those in captivity free, a time of relinquishing all debts and burdens.

No doubt, the people gathered there in the Nazarene synagogue, (*who were currently under Roman oppression*) was anxious to hear what he had to say about this particular passage... Expecting Him to express the hope and the promise in that passage of the coming Messiah. But rather than proclaim the coming of the Messiah, He declares that He is the Messiah...

(Vs 21) Jesus said unto them... *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

An undeniable claim to be the Messiah...and the people knew it. It shocked the people, they began to say, “*Is this not Joseph’s son?*” They were in disbelief. Jesus knew that would be the case, he goes on to declare that no prophet is accepted in his own country. He offers up the account of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and how they had to go to neighboring Gentile nations to find acceptance. Which, all this made them furious, to the point they threw him out of the city, with plans to throw him over the hill of the city, killing him. But Jesus managed to escape.

Jesus declares himself to be the *Messiah*, the “*Anointed One*,” anointed with the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus declares that Israel’s time of redemption had come! But it would be in a way that many of the Jews were unable to grasp. They pictured their Messiah as a conqueror who would free them of Rome... But instead, Jesus was a conqueror who would set them free fro SIN...The sin that had caused and brought about the captivity and oppression in the first place...

¹⁸*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

...because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to **the poor**.....he hath sent me to heal **the brokenhearted**...

...to preach deliverance to **the captives**.....recovering of sight to **the blind**...

...to set at liberty **them that are bruised**.....¹⁹To proclaim **the acceptable year of the Lord**...

Listen, Jesus came to announce *the dawning of a new day*... He comes with the offer of the “*Free pardon of sin!*” The ailments he describes here speak of broken lives, troubled hearts, and people without hope, lives that have been victimized by the enemy Satan! Lives that have been ravished by SIN! He presented himself as the answer to all the ills that torment us! Satan has destroyed many lives, but here, Christ offers hope and forgiveness, and restoration to all who come... He offers to cancel all your debts, setting you free from bondage to the enemy! It is the offer of liberty and life... No matter where you are, no matter where life has taken you, regardless of the depths sin has taken you... *Today is the day of salvation*...