

JESUS REJECTED BY HIS HOMETOWN

Luke 4:16-30 / Yeshua §40

I pretty much left home the summer I graduated from high school. In fact, I missed high school graduation training for the tour with Continental Singers. I started classes at BIOLA just days after tour ended. I came back on holidays to my home church, but toured each summer so like I said, I pretty much left home and church at 18.

Four years later I was directing a tour. We did a concert at my home church. It was a little surreal because I was treated a bit like a celebrity. The church was packed to overflowing. There were promotional posters on the bulletin board with my picture. It seemed like everyone wanted a hug or a handshake. People loved the concert. We received a standing ovation and sang a couple encores. It was a heady experience. We left the next morning before I did or said anything to alter people's opinion. I left town with the good wishes of my church family.

As we continue our series, Jesus Messiah King, Jesus returns home after several exciting, eventful months. But unlike my experience, Jesus' homecoming turned deadly.

JESUS RETURNS TO HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH

Sometime after healing the official's son, Jesus traveled southwest from Cana to His hometown of Nazareth. Jesus lived and worked in Nazareth until He was about 32. Although He had not been gone long, much had happened since launching His public ministry. Jesus had gained five disciples. He had cleansed the Temple. He had begun publicly teaching, and performing signs and wonders. He'd been received by the Samaritan village of Sychar. Most recently He healed an official's son in Capernaum while He Himself was in Cana.



Initially, Jesus was welcomed by His hometown. These were the people who knew Him from when He was a little boy returning with Joseph and Mary from Egypt. He went to school with their kids. They were His buddies growing up. He celebrated their weddings. He attended the circumcisions of their little boys. He wept with them at their funerals. These were His aunties and uncles. He'd done wood work and stone work for many of them. He'd attended synagogue with them for over 25 years. He'd caravanned with them to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts three times a year for twenty years. These were His people, the people of Nazareth.

Jesus came back to Nazareth a different man. He was now a public figure. Some had seen Him clear the Temple. Others heard Him preach either in Jerusalem or on the way home along the Jordan River. They heard about the boy in Capernaum who had been healed.

John the Baptizer declared Jesus to be the promised one, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus was declaring that He is the promised Messiah.

Will His own people put their trust in Him?

How will their familiarity with Him influence their response to His claims?

JESUS TEACHES ON THE SABBATH AT THE NAZARETH SYNAGOGUE



When Sabbath came, Jesus attended sabbath service at the Nazareth synagogue as He had hundreds of times growing up. The synagogue was like a second home to Jesus. At five he started attending Nazareth

- Part 1. The Coming of the King
- Part 2. The Authentication of the King**
 - **Jesus Rejected By His Hometown**
- Part 3. The Controversy over the King
- Part 4. The Training of the Twelve by the King
- Part 5. The Opposition to the King:
- Part 6. The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
- Part 7. The Official Presentation of the King
- Part 8. The Preparation for the Death of the King
- Part 9. The Trial of the King:
- Part 10. The Death of the King
- Part 11. The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King
- Part 12. The Sequels

elementary school which met at the synagogue at least six days a week. He attended weekly Sabbath services with His parents for years. It is likely Jesus participated in the Sabbath services; one of the privileges that followed *Bar Mitzvah* at age 13 was the privilege of participating in the Sabbath service as a reader or an attendant.

Sabbath services in first century Judaism were fairly standardized. A synagogue service had specific elements including recitation of the *Shema* (*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* Deut. 6:4–9). After the *Shema* formal prayers were recited. Then there was a reading from the Law of Moses, then a reading from one of the Prophets followed by a teaching on the passages read. A closing prayer concluded the Sabbath service. Members of the congregation were selected to read the Law of Moses and the reading from the Prophets. Undoubtedly Jesus had read the Scriptures many times during Sabbath services in this very synagogue.

On this Sabbath recorded in Luke 4:16, Jesus was given the privilege of reading from the Prophets and teaching on the passage.

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE FULFILLMENT OF ISAIAH 61:1-2 (LUKE 4:16-22)

LUKE 4:16–22 (ESV)

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

It was customary to stand to read Scripture and to sit when teaching. It appears Jesus chose to read from the prophet Isaiah. When the scroll was brought by the attendant, Jesus opened the scroll to Isaiah 61 and read verses 1-2. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down to teach. Verse 21 says *he began to say to them*. That phrase in Greek indicates Jesus began to teach on the passage He just read. He said much more about it than just, *Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*. Verse 22 bears this out because the people *marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth*.

The initial response of the congregation was a positive reaction to Jesus' speaking skills. Marveling at His words was a positive response to His rhetorical skill, not to His claims.

On hearing Isaiah 61, it is likely the audience thought about the coming of God's new age of salvation; the promised Messianic age and Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah, as God's prophet, declared he has been anointed by God's Spirit to proclaim the message of deliverance and liberation. Jesus applied the passage to Himself. He is the Spirit anointed Servant *par excellence*. If the nation will receive Him as Messiah, He will do all the things described not only in verses 1-2, but the whole of chapter 61; He will usher in the Messianic Age.

It is with this claim that His people take issue. On one hand, they admire His speaking abilities, but on the other hand they are skeptical about His claim to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2. The crowds' reaction is like the reaction a person may have to a politician who is a good communicator: "He is an effective speaker, but I don't accept his point of view."

Notice what the congregation said:

LUKE 4:22 (ESV)

22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

What was the point of this rhetorical question?

Again, they recognized He was a gifted communicator, but they were skeptical about His claim to be the One to bring in the Messianic Age. In their view, Jesus didn't have the pedigree to be Messiah.

Jesus' response proves that with their question, things had turned negative.

JESUS ANTICIPATES THEIR REJECTION AND WARNS OF ITS CONSEQUENCES (LUKE 4:22-27)

LUKE 4:22-27 (ESV)

22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

Here, Jesus functions as a prophet anticipating their rejection. He anticipates they will challenge Him to prove Himself by the proverb: *Physician, heal yourself* and the demand He do a miracle in Nazareth similar to the one in Capernaum. Jesus was claiming to be the person Who will usher in the Messianic Age described in Isaiah 61. But they're not buying it. He's no Messiah; He's Joseph's son. They knew where He lives. They knew His mother, His brothers and His sisters (comp. Matt. 13:53-58). They may have thought Him a good man. They definitely thought He was a great communicator, but the Messiah? He's no Messiah.

Familiarity breeds contempt.

They had plenty of evidence that validated Jesus' claim: John the Baptizer's proclamation about Jesus, Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, the signs Jesus performed in Jerusalem, and most recently the healing of the boy in Capernaum. Jesus wasn't going to give them any further signs; they're hearts and minds were already closed to Him.

Instead of a sign, Jesus gave them a warning. Like their people of old, they will not experience the deliverance of God which comes to those who believe; even those who are not of Israel. By rejecting Jesus, they risk God's rejection. Outsiders might end up being blessed, while God's Chosen are left out.

The crowd knew their biblical history and got the point. The idea that Jesus might reach out to outsiders, to Gentiles, angered them. But perhaps what angered them most was that, by implication, Jesus was saying they were worse than Syrian lepers and Phoenician widows.

Rather than a closing prayer, the Sabbath service concluded with angry shouts denouncing Jesus as a false prophet worthy of death. Synagogue leaders took hold of Jesus and roughly pulled Jesus out of the synagogue to a nearby cliff.

THE NAZARENES ATTEMPTED TO KILL JESUS (LUKE 4:28-29)

LUKE 4:28-29 (ESV)

28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.

These were His boyhood friends, His neighbors, His aunties and uncles, His business associates. Not only were they offended and filled with wrath, but if they viewed Jesus as a false prophet, they might have felt justified in killing Him according to the Law of Moses (Deut. 13:5). Whatever the case, it was a terrible moment in the life of the community.

But it did not end with Jesus' death.

JESUS WALKED AWAY (LUKE 4:30)

LUKE 4:30 (ESV)

30 But passing through their midst, he went away.

Jesus cannot and will not be killed before His hour. What grief must have filled His heart as Jesus walked away from His hometown.

What the prophet Simeon predicted was playing itself out:

LUKE 2:34-35 (ESV)

34 ..."Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed
35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

We are challenged to believe the exact same thing the Nazarenes were challenged to believe: that Jesus is the Messiah King Who will usher in the Messianic Kingdom described in Isaiah 61:

ISAIAH 61 (ESV)

1 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;
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;
6 but you shall be called the priests of the Lord;
they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
you shall eat the wealth of the nations,
and in their glory you shall boast.

7 Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy.

8 For I the Lord love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
9 Their offspring shall be known among the nations,
and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

I feel compelled to emphasize this point because so many churches and teachers hold to replacement theology. Replacement theology teaches that God rejected Israel because Israel rejected Jesus. As a result, the Church replaces Israel in God's plans.

Replacement theology is wrong for many reasons but one obvious reason is that Israel's rejection of Messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures in Psalms and Isaiah 53. Their rejection didn't delete them from God's plan, it delayed Israel's receiving the Messianic Kingdom. Second, replacement theology makes God a liar; the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic and New Covenants are all unconditional. If God fails to fulfill His unconditional covenants with Israel He is a liar and unworthy of our worship. And if He breaks His Word with Israel then how can we be sure He won't break His Word to us?

Jesus is coming again not only to fulfill God's promises to us, but to Israel. At the end of the Tribulation, the surviving remnant of Jews will be lead by their spiritual leaders to trust in Jesus as their Messiah. When this happens, Jesus will return and fulfill Isaiah 61.