

The Gospel Of Luke

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and 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 bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'²⁰

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'²²(Luke 4:16-21. NRSV)

Message 3

The Mandate of Messiah

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Luke 4:14-30

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Introduction:

Open your Bibles to Luke 4:14-30. We are going to focus in this morning on verses 18-21 but as we go I will provide some drive by observations ahead and behind that passage to that we can deal with it in context.

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

Everything Jesus did he did in an 'imitatable way'. That's not a real word but its good theology. Jesus did the things he did by the power of the Holy Spirit – the same power that is available to us today. He didn't do it out of his vast supply of Jesus-ness, he did it by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's important, but we're not preaching on that this morning.

¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.

Now stop right there and look up here. I WISH we had time to preach on this this morning. Do you see this? He went to synagogue AS WAS HIS CUSTOM. It was the custom of Jesus to participate in corporate worship. I am so sick of hearing ‘Christ followers’; whatever that means, say that they are following Jesus even though they don’t go to church. ‘Its not about church man, its about following Jesus’. That is absolute illogical non-sense. If you were following Jesus you would BE IN CHURCH because that is where the trail leads friends! It was the custom of Jesus to participate in corporate worship and it better be your custom if you are ‘following Jesus’. But we’re not talking about that today. This is what we’re talking about right here in verse 17:

He stood up to read, ¹⁷and 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,
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He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

ALL SPOKE WELL OF HIM. Hallelujah! Isn’t it wonderful to bring the word of the Lord.

Watch how fast that can change:

They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’ ²³He said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.”’

Now Luke leaves out some info here that we wish we had and thankfully Mark provides it. Luke has his own point to make so he doesn’t explain why the crowds turned on Jesus here. He just said that Jesus preached a good message, the people were amazed and then they turned on him.

Mark tells us why. Mark records this story too and adds this detail; we'll pick it up at Mark 6:3 so that you can see the seam here in the story:

³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary* and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence* at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief. (Mark 6:3-6. NRSV)

Things went sour for Jesus when he didn't do any miracles there because of their unbelief. 'That was a nice sermon Jesus now give us the light show! Dance miracle boy, DANCE!' But Jesus didn't dance because of their unbelief. That would be a good sermon, let's come back to that one on another day. But we need to keep moving here.

²⁴And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.'

Now these are fighting words. Jesus says in essence: 'The focus of my ministry in this next phase of God's salvation work is not going to be Israel. You all lack faith. The focus is going to be among the Gentiles.' That comment did not win Jesus any friends and we see the outcome in verse 28:

²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way. (NRSV)

Jesus was in charge and God's timing is his own amen? Amen, I love Jesus don't you? That's our passage in a nutshell now let's drill down on verses 18-21.

the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
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²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (NRSV)

I've told you before that Jesus was quoting from the well known passage in Isaiah where the mandate for the Messiah was laid out in detail, that's found in Isaiah 61:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn (NRSV)

From this passage and others like it the Jews had a well defined sense of mandate for the Messiah. It was a three part mandate that would have looked like this:

- 1. Deliverance.**
- 2. Vengeance**
- 3. Recompense**

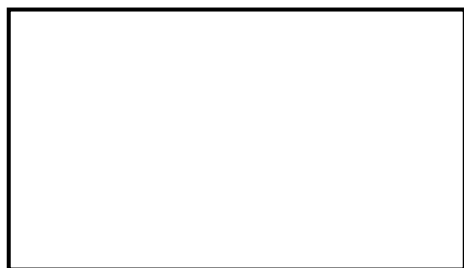
Save us Lord! Rescue us from our chains and our bondage Jesus! Bring us God's salvation. That was step one. Then pay back the evil doer Lord! Let your anger burst forth against injustice. Break the arm of the evil doer Jesus. That was step two. And then recompense us for what we have suffered at the hands of evil men. Pay us our eternal reward Jesus. That was step three. And what Jesus does that confounds his audience is made clear in verses 19-21:

¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (NRSV)

He chopped the mandate. He stopped at part one. He says in essence: 'I have come to bring salvation and deliverance and redemption and that is it. The rest will have to wait.' That is why the crowd marvelled at his GRACIOUS WORDS. Jesus says: 'I have come to open the

SEASON OF FAVOUR and it will stay open for the foreseeable future.’ That’s incredible, that’s amazing and that was unexpected. The Apostle Paul calls this the mystery of the Gospel – the secret of God that he delighted to withhold until just the right moment. Make no mistake friends, this extended grace ministry caught people off guard. Let me show you how OT prophecy had settled into established expectation. Look at this picture:



“The Present Age”

Jewish thought divided all reality into two epochs, this present age (represented by the box above) and the age to come:



“The Present Age”

“The Age To Come”

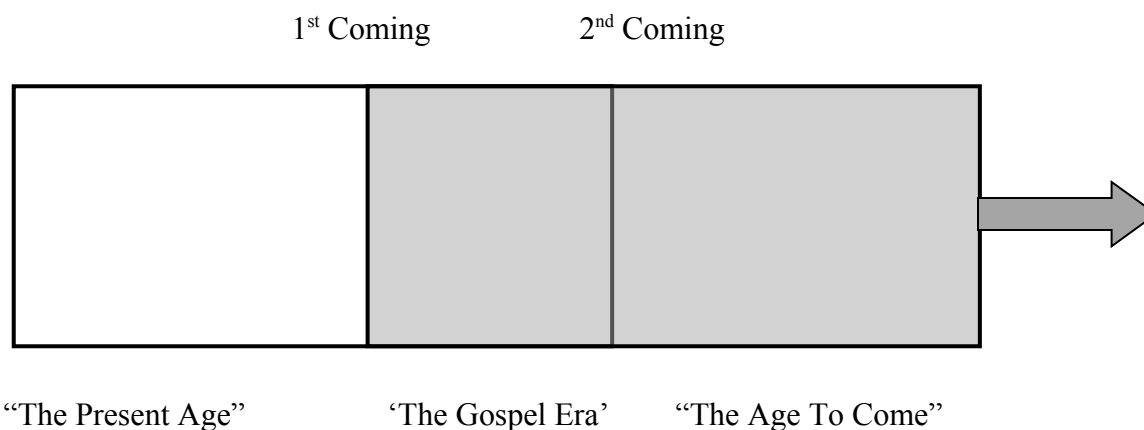
The age to come would be the eternal reign of God over the earth with Messiah on the throne of David in Jerusalem. They saw these ages as coming hard one on the other with the transition being facilitated by the arrival of Messiah. They got that expectation from passages like Daniel where there was a dream about all the empires of the human realm being decisively shattered by a coming ROCK from heaven:

³⁴As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. ³⁵Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:34-35. NRSV)

A king and a kingdom would descend from heaven AND SHATTER the kingdoms of this world and this kingdom of heaven would fill the earth and reign over it. So the coming of Messiah was expected to be cataclysmic and filled with wrath and political upheaval. That's why John the Baptist said:

¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:10. NRSV)

'Repent you brood of vipers! Jesus is coming!! Run for your life because the axe is lying at the root of the tree! Every proud thing will be cut down and thrown into the fire and his kingdom shall be lifted up and it will fill the whole earth!' The Old Testament expectation was for one cataclysmic coming. But now Jesus unveils a mystery, the mystery of a two part coming. The New Testament presents this picture:



With the coming of Jesus, the New Testament still says, we have come to the end of the present age. That's why when the Gospel message began to go forth through the disciples Jesus said:

¹⁸He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. (Luke 10:18-19. NRSV)

“I see the end of an era. I’ve had a vision of Satan’s reign falling due to the forward progress of the kingdom! I see the authority of restored humanity growing and the reach of Satan diminishing, hallelujah!” That’s why in the New Testament we see phrases like:

¹¹These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom **the ends of the ages have come**. (1 Corinthians 10:11. NRSV)

The NT authors understood that with the coming of Jesus there was a transition from one age to another, but they now understood that it would be a more staged transition than they had at first thought. Now instead of a shattering rock that instantly raises up a kingdom, now we have a mustard seed that grows and grows and grows. Jesus said:

‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.’ (Mark 4:30-32. NRSV)

But and this is an important but, the shattering conclusion is still retained. Jesus spoke more about the shattering conclusion to the transitional period than any other prophet. He says that the gradual growth of the kingdom through Gospel proclamation will go on towards a final and cataclysmic end. In a long discourse in Matthew 24 he spells out this reality:

¹⁴And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and **then the end will come**. (Matthew 24:14. NRSV)

Here he introduces the tension of gradual spread followed by dramatic end. He gives us more detail a few verses later in the same sermon:

²¹For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²²And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (NRSV)

Now by the way church, does the church, the elect of God, get a pass on the suffering, the tribulation that Jesus says is coming? No!! We are right there in the middle of it and for OUR SAKE those final days will be kept short.

He goes on to describe the second coming:

²⁷For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Luke 24:27. NRSV)

There's your shattering rock from heaven! There's your cataclysmic coming! The first coming does not cancel the second coming, in fact the prophecy of John the Baptist is not wrong concerning Jesus. The Apostle John describes the second coming of Jesus this way:

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in^{*} blood, and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule^{*} them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. (Revelation 19:11-16. NRSV)

The second coming is quick, it is catastrophic, it is decisive and it firmly establishes the reign of Messiah over the kingdoms of this earth. Hallelujah! And, the Bible quickly tells us, he hasn't forgotten about the recompense either. In the very next chapter we are told:

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; ¹⁵and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15. NRSV)

That's the recompense when justice is served and accounts are balanced. The next chapter provides more information still:

'See, the home^{*} of God is among mortals.
He will dwell^{*} with them;
they will be his peoples,^{*}
and God himself will be with them;^{*}
⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for **the first things have passed away.**' (Revelation 21:3-4. NRSV)

The Bible says: 'It is all going down just like the prophets foretold. The first age will pass away! There will be regime change, there will be wrath against sin and injustice it will happen! There will be comfort and recompense, you can count on it! But first there will be a season of mercy and patience. Can you endure it? Can you wait and watch and work until the purpose of the

Lord is fulfilled?’ The Bible says in no uncertain terms that the FULL MANDATE OF MESSIAH will be accomplished by Jesus Christ but it also says that the mystery of the Gospel is the disclosure of this extended season of grace and favour until the full number of the Gentiles has come into the kingdom. That’s the full implication of this incredible passage in Luke chapter 4. Now as we sit under that incredible Scripture, what do we need to be careful to notice about God, let’s summarise those briefly:

What Does This Scripture Reveal About God?

1. God is kind (yet still just)

As we sit and contemplate the mystery of this extended season of grace and favour we have to ask the question: why? Why is this here? Why are we here? What does this reveal about God? It reveals something truly amazing: it reveals the kindness of God who desires all men to be saved.

²²**Note then the kindness** and the severity of God: severity towards those who have fallen, but God’s kindness towards you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22. NRSV)

This interim reality, this in between kingdom reveals the kindness of God. He wanted more people to get saved so he extended the transition of the two kingdoms to maximise exposure and opportunity. He did it though in a way that preserves his justice. The unbelieving and rebellious will still be cut off, they will still be punished, God is still severe with sin, but a way exists now for as many as believe to avoid having to face that. God is good.

2. God is patient (but not forever)

Peter reminds us of that:

⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you,^{*} not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰**But the day of the Lord will come** like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.^{*} (2 Peter 3:9-10. NRSV)

God is patient, but the day of the Lord will come. It will come fast, and it will be decisive, believe you me.

3. God's ways are higher than our ways

Finally, this passage reminds us that God's ways are higher than our ways. Everybody thought they had this system down. The Jews had their coloured charts showing the sequence of how the last things were going to play out and they WERE ALL WRONG. Let us be instructed by that. Brothers and sisters when you start making charts and saying with certainty things that cannot be said with certainty you are setting yourself up for a very humbling experience. John the Baptist didn't have this nailed down, I don't think you do. I've heard some people point to the coloured charts in their Schofield Study Bibles and tell me that Russia is Gog and Magog and the Rapture is going to happen just before the rebuilt temple starts to sacrifice on the dome of the Rock and OH MY GOODNESS!!! You have this nailed down? You know how this is going to play out? Careful friends. God's ways are higher than our ways.

Conclusion: How Then Shall We Live?

When someone who trembles at the Word of God is confronted with a majestic passage like this the right response is to ask the question: how then shall we live? If God is kind, though still just, if God is patient, though not forever and if God's ways are infinitely higher than my ways, HOW LORD SHALL I LIVE? Let me tell you how I leave this passage.

I leave this holy place determined to live with **deep gratitude**. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God! I am so glad that God waited long enough for me to come to my senses. I'm so grateful for the blood of the cross which has washed all of my sins away. I want to be a grateful person no matter my earthly circumstances. What can the world take from me as it dies its dying breath? Nothing. I've got it all in Jesus and I am content and I am grateful.

I also leave with **a sense of urgency**. We are already in the last days. This is a transition, not a destination and the hour grows short. This world is not my home and I will not invest too much in something that is perishing. I will be invested in the only wise course to my eyes: the salvation

of those who would otherwise perish. I can't think of any other rational pursuit and all the more as we see the day approaching.

I will also leave this place today with **profound humility**. God's ways are high and I see through a glass darkly. I know in part. I prophesy in part. I will not make coloured charts. I will not play 'name the anti-Christ', I will not publish my theory for how Barack Obama's name somehow equals 666. I will not play those games. I know what I know. I know he's coming. I know sin will not stand and I know God will reveal through his Word and his prophets exactly what I need to know to endure to the end. Beyond that there are things I do not know. I do not know the day or the hour. I expect to be surprised by many things that happen. But I will watch because my master said to watch. I will not fall asleep because he said to stay awake. I will not get distracted because he said he would hold me to account. This is what I know and this is the path I will walk from this place. And all God's people said: Amen.