

THE BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

Do you attend the church you grew up in? Do you have a "home church" today? Both are great blessings for people who make worship a priority. In Luke 4:14-22 we read about Jesus visiting His home house of worship. His particular purpose was to make a powerful proclamation.

Jesus had been tested in the wilderness of Judea, then "*returned in the power of the Spirit*" to Galilee. He came to Nazareth where He had been raised, one of twenty-four towns which provided priests for temple duty in Jerusalem. But the town itself did not have a great reputation, as John 1:46 records a popular sentiment, "*can anything good come out of Nazareth?*"

1- "Hometown Boy Makes Good" could have been the headline in the Nazareth News. Verse 16 records, "*as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read.*" JC Ryle aptly notes, "we are not lightly to forsake any assembly of worshipers which professes to respect the name, the day and the book of God. But there is no blessing promised to him who tarries at home." Make the Bible your daily priority, as Jesus did.

Every aspect of a typical synagogue service was taken from Scripture. It began with songs from Psalm 146-150, then worshipers recited the Shema from Deuteronomy 6, "*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*" After prayers, the Torah was taken from its holy cupboard, and people read several passages, then the rabbi would teach from Scripture. The priest closed with the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:22. How different from many today, as it is said, "one of the biggest scams Satan has running today is the lie that reading the Bible is a chore."

2- Announcement of the Anointed One. A scroll of Isaiah was given to Jesus. The people stood, and He read: "*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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" This beloved passage spoke deeply to the Israelites in their oppression.

Jesus rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down to teach, as was a rabbi's custom. Every eye was fixed on this young teacher who had attracted so much acclaim. And He began to say to them, verse 21 "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" And everyone spoke well of Him and marveled at His gracious words, and they said, "*is this not Joseph's son?*" His grace-filled words from God's Word were a powerful proclamation of God's precious promises, about Him! In their pride, at first people missed the outrageous presumption made by this son of their city, brought up by their neighbor the local builder Joseph.

3- Proclamation of the Promised One. Jesus recited from messianic passages of Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. He read "*proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" but left out the last half of the last line "*and the day of vengeance of our God.*" This got the attention of His audience, far better versed in Scripture than most people today. Prophetic scriptures come to us like a mountain range, which from afar looks closer and monolithic, but as we get nearer we see the foothills as distinct and no longer blending in to the higher ranges and peaks, still far off.

This passage is like that. "Jesus was obviously saying, first, the consolation of Israel promised long before by Isaiah found its ultimate expression in Jesus Christ and His message," observes RK Hughes, "and second, while the day of vengeance of our God will come, it was not being fulfilled on that day. What was being fulfilled that day was the year (season) of the Lord's favor (grace)." Jesus says the long-awaited age of Messiah has come! This passage echoes with Mark 1:15, as Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, "*The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.*"

4- Declaration of the Deliverer. Jesus' words could not have been more dramatic: "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" As He taught, Jesus would have preached how God's message about Messiah written 700 years before in Isaiah had come true in Him that day. Now is the year, the season, the day of salvation. The consolation of Israel has come!

And Jesus taught with authority, explaining the Word of God: how the Messiah has come, the era of the Deliverer was upon them, to fulfill God's promises and blessings, and to greatly glorify the Lord God. Hallelujah! Will you receive Him? ☐