

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

THE RESCUE *begins*

GOD AMONG US

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

The rejection of Jesus was prophesied long before He came. *Isaiah 53:3 (ESV)*³ *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* After He came, the disciple John wrote: *John 1:11 (ESV)*¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* None of us like rejection. But, when God came among us – He was rejected even by the people in Nazareth, the very town where He grew up. However, Jesus through the power and might of the Holy Spirit moved beyond that rejection for the purpose of causing those who would accept Him to not be rejected by God.

No one wants to be rejected – especially not by close friends and family. Oftentimes, we are astonished when someone hurts us or rejects us within the church family. We should not be surprised. After all, the rejection of Jesus in His hometown began in Nazareth's local place of worship – the synagogue.

By New Testament times, the synagogue had become the local place of worship. Local worship had been discouraged during most of the Old Testament times because it often was associated with pagan practices. Worship centered around the Temple in Jerusalem. After Solomon's Temple was destroyed and many of the people were carried into exile, local worship and instruction became necessary. Even after the exile, places of local worship called synagogues continued. Faithful Jews continued to go to the Temple in Jerusalem for appointed feasts but they also participated in their local synagogues.

Jesus made a habit of going to the local synagogue wherever He was to worship. This is a reminder to us that if we are to be like Jesus we must also participate in local worship.

When He went to His hometown synagogue, Jesus claimed to be the Spirit-Filled Messiah promised by Isaiah.

Read Luke 4:14-19 (ESV)¹⁴ *And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.*¹⁵ *And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.*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*

The first thing I want you to notice is the way Jesus quotes the prophecy of **Isaiah 61** reveals a ‘mystery’ about the Messiah’s coming. Jesus breaks off reading right in the middle of Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus reads that He has been sent *to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor*. We know He stopped mid-sentence when we do a comparison of His words to **Isaiah 61:2** *to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God...* Why not finish the sentence? The mystery is that the Old Testament prophets (like Isaiah) saw the coming of the Messiah through the telescope of time not realizing there would be a separation of time between God’s salvation and God’s coming judgment. The First Coming of Jesus opened the ‘day of grace’. God’s judgment will come at the Second Coming of Jesus. Jesus understood that He had not come to bring judgment at that time; therefore, He stopped where He did in the passage.

Some Bible interpreters believe that the readings from the Scriptures were based on a fixed three-year cycle. If so, Jesus would have read a regularly prescribed passage. However, other Bible interpreters believe that Luke’s use of the word **found** implies Jesus chose the particular passage in Isaiah to read. I like to think that the text in Isaiah was the text that was due to be read on that particular day. Jesus “found” it on the scroll much like we would find a passage in our Bible today. What better way for Jesus to share the good news about Himself that through regular Bible study! Most of us who study the Bible regularly will attest to the fact that God uses regular Bible study to speak to us.

The passage in Isaiah spoke of the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee. The Year of Jubilee lasted for a year every 50 years. It was a time when all debts were cancelled, all slaves were freed, and all property returned to its original owners (**Leviticus 25**). But the release from Babylonian exile had not brought the fulfillment the people had expected; they were still a conquered and oppressed people. Isaiah looked beyond an earthly Jubilee to a future Messianic age.

Warren Wiersbe comments, “If you have trusted Christ as your Savior, you are living today in a spiritual ‘Year of Jubilee’. You have been set free from bondage; your spiritual debt to the Lord has been paid; you are living in ‘*the year of the Lord’s favor*.’ Instead of the ashes of mourning, you have a crown on your head, for He has made you a king (**Rev. 1:6**). You have been anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and you wear a garment of righteousness!”

Read Luke 4:20-22 (ESV). ”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. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”

Jesus Christ took the words of Isaiah and He applied those words to Himself to the amazed synagogue goers. To apply them to Himself is one thing and to prove it quite another, but He proved it by what He did. He died as a sacrifice for our sins and then conquered death and rose again!

I can only imagine the folks sitting in the synagogue that day. Jesus is standing reading the scriptures and many are only half-listening to the familiar passage and suddenly Jesus says something they did not quite understand: *Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.* What did Jesus mean? *Is not this Joseph’s son?* They knew His family. What kind of insight into the scriptures would Jesus have?

Jesus faced rejection from His people just like the prophets.

Read Luke 4:23-27 (ESV)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.”*

Jesus either heard the crowd murmuring among themselves or He read their hearts! Jesus referenced an ancient saying about the physician that implied that a person who claimed to be able to help others should be able to help himself. The crowd reaction in Nazareth is a ‘cameo shot’ of the reaction of the people to come later as He hung on the cross. **Luke 23:35 (ESV)**³⁵ *And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”*

At first, they admired the way He taught, but it did not take long for their admiration to turn into antagonism. Why? Because Jesus began to remind them of God's goodness to the Gentiles! The Jews would need salvation by grace just like the Gentiles. The Prophet Elijah bypassed all the Jewish widows and helped a Gentile widow in Sidon, and his successor Elisha healed a Gentile leper from Syria. Our Lord's message of grace was a blow to the proud Jews who believe only their race was ‘chosen’ by Jehovah, and they would not repent.

Jesus continued His ministry despite His people's rejection.

Read Luke 4:28-30 (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.* ³⁰ *But passing through their midst, he went away.*

I am told that on the south side of Nazareth is the Mt. of Precipitation (Mt. of Precipice) that has a beautiful view of the Jezreel Valley. Throughout the ages, many battles have taken place here. Because of its location in the same valley as Megiddo, Jezreel is considered to be a likely spot for the future and final battle of Armageddon. It is believed that Mt. of Precipice is where the Jews from the synagogue wanted to hurl Jesus down the hill and kill Him. Some say He leaped from the mountain but the Bible says this: *passing through their midst, he went away.* Jesus' escape was all part of God's plan. Jesus was born to die to save sinners; however, Jesus would die in God's way in God's own timing. He went next to Capernaum where He healed a demon possessed man who had come to the synagogue there. Both Matthew and Mark record the fact that the Lord Jesus moved His headquarters from His hometown of Nazareth to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. He did this because the people from His own town would not receive Him. As I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson: *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* His own (the Jews) as a whole still do not accept Him today. But, their lack of acceptance did not then and does not today change the fact of who Jesus is. Job who lived many centuries before the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus said in the midst of his pain and suffering: *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.* **Job 19:25 (ESV)**

Many times in their pain and suffering people blame God for their suffering and wind up rejecting the LORD. He sent His Son to heal us – to save us – to give us life. Believe God like Job did! *I know that my Redeemer lives.* Accept His Son's words that this is the *year of the Lord's favor!*