
a *Grace Notes* course

Life of Christ 100

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Lesson 110

Ministry and Rejection at Nazareth

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Luke 4:16, "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read."

This verse reveals again the strategy of Christ in going to the synagogues - but it also refers to a custom of His from youth, and the foundation of His strategy.

The participle TETHRAMMENOS vividly portrays the bringing up of Christ.

The basis meaning of TREPHO has to do with the care of animals. It really indicates just feeding and watering them. In fact, it is probable that our English word trough comes from this very verb.

This participle is in the perfect periphrastic construction, which is the most intense and vivid way to portray action with the Greek language.

The passive voice shows that Christ did not grow up by himself, but that He had been brought up by His parents.

Going into the synagogue on the Sabbath was the EIOTHOS of Christ. This word comes from ETHOS, which means custom, or even law. From this same word we draw the English 'Ethics'. Not only was this a custom, but it was a rigid habit.

From the context itself, it appears that this was His habit from youth. That He would go into the synagogue on the Sabbath and read.

The synagogue was a place for local gatherings of Jews, outside of Jerusalem.

Here, the local rabbi would read Scripture and instruct upon it. This usually occurred on the Sabbath, and during the feasts.

Here, the local children and young men would receive religious instruction.

The interior of the synagogue had seating arrangements, and, a platform. This platform was called the BEMA. It was situated either in the center of the room, or at one end. On the BEMA was an ark, which carried the scrolls of Scripture.

Often the synagogues that were far from Jerusalem would also add the entire ritual system, so that their members could understand the truth.

Since this was Christ, and it was His hometown, it is likely that on this day the synagogue would have been especially full.

John 4:17-20, "And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him."

The quoted passage is Isaiah 61:1-2. But, Christ paraphrases part of it, leaves some of it out, and adds a little something on His own initiative.

Here is the quote from the NASB: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

Christ substitutes gospel for good news, a paraphrase.

He substitutes 'poor' for 'afflicted', but this distinction can be blurred by translation.

Then Christ sets up parallel statements:

- Release to the captives;
- Recovery of sight to the blind;
- Set free those who are downtrodden;
- Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

Isaiah's parallel of these things is:

- Bind up the brokenhearted;
- Proclaim liberty to the captives;
- Freedom to the prisoners;
- Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

But note - Christ's addition comes from another place in

Isaiah 6:9,10, "Go, and tell this people: "Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears understand with their hearts, and return and be healed."

As for leaving out certain things, well that is perfectly alright. He had a specific reason for doing so.

Another reason for their rapt attention was that the Isaiah 61 passage is messianic. It speaks of the anointed one of the Lord, who is the Messiah. Here the man who is reputedly the Messiah, and He chooses to read a Messianic passage. And this passage, when read, is in the first person... "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME... The Lord has anointed ME... He has sent ME..."

The favorable year of the Lord is the year of Jubilee. And Christ is saying here that the Jubilee is upon them.

A loud trumpet would proclaim liberty throughout Israel on the tenth day of the seventh month (the day of atonement), after a lapse of seven Sabbaths of years. So every fiftieth year was a jubilee year.

On this year, the following things would occur - Lev 25:8-17.

- It was considered a normal sabbatical year, so the land would lie fallow for the second consecutive year. cf. Lev 25:2-7.
- The trumpet would sound on the day of atonement.
- They specifically remembered their time of slavery in Egypt, and their release from captivity.
- All of the slaves in the land were released, although this was often applied only to those of Abrahamic descent (Leviticus does not say that).
- All of the real property reverted to its hereditary owners. This signified that God was the owner of Israel's land - v.23.

Interestingly enough, this struck a course that was anti socialist, but not truly capitalist. It was anti-monopolistic.

It definitely reaffirmed the right to own property, and rejected the redistribution of wealth based on need.

However, reversion to hereditary landholdings every fifty years assured that there would be no long-lasting monopolies.

Property values were adjusted according to how many years it was to Jubilee.

The Jubilee was not practiced or mentioned after the Babylonian exile. This is the third reason why Christ had their rapt attention. Surely such a proclamation would surely take their breath away.

From the aorist passive verb EPEDOTHE, we understand that someone handed to Christ the scroll of Isaiah. In other words, Christ did not get to choose the scroll of reading. Whoever it was may have known the Messianic character of this book, for it is full of Messianic prophecies. From verse 20, it is understood that the synagogue attendant was the one who handed Christ the scroll.

The verb ATENIZO describes the riveted eyes of the congregation. The verb means to stretch muscles or ligaments, and came to denote a staring countenance, almost with the eyes bulging out of the head.

John 4:21,22, "And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." But all were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

Now Christ began to tell them something about this reading, in other words, what was important about it. The aorist tense of ARCHOMAI concentrates on the very moment of the beginning, and so these words barely got out of Christ's mouth, and he may not have finished the complete sentence reproduced here.

What he was about to say, and was interrupted during, was that He Himself was the anointed one, the preacher, the atoning sacrifice that gave freedom. But...

But Christ is interrupted by an uproar of voices in the synagogue - and they are all talking of Christ.

Now, the KAI at the beginning of verse twenty two is adversative, and should be translated "but".

This conversation goes on simultaneously with Christ speaking. Does this bother you? It bothers me.

The imperfect tense of MARTUROO makes it clear that this was an ongoing roar of voices.

The verb THAUMAZO is also in the imperfect. They are all - PANTES - all testifying out loud, and marveling in their souls.

But there is a right time for everything, and this is not the right time for talking and marveling.

They testified and marveled at the gracious words which went forth from His lips. But this observation is about the scroll reading, and not Christ's sermon which was to follow, for we know from the Greek that they interrupted Him before He could really talk.

The verb EKPOREUOMAI describes the words going forth from the lips of our Lord. And, it concentrates on their enunciation. What they were saying was this: "When He reads that scroll He is so eloquent." But nowhere in this description is there a description of the words getting into their hearts and lives.

The crowd also notes that Christ is the home town boy made good. "Is this not Joseph's son?" is a question that expects a positive answer. They are marveling at this kid who is now a man, and whom they know.

It is a weird and ironic scene - a crowd bubbling with conversation over the eloquence of their home town boy, when at the same time this man, no, the Messiah is beginning to speak more words.

As we will see, Christ immediately identifies their character, and their terrible flaw. Instead of talking about Christ, they should have been listening to Christ.

John 4:23,24, "And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this parable to Me, "Physician, heal yourself!" We heard certain things were happening at Capernaum, do them here in your fatherland as well." And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town."

Now Christ replies, and He begins with the adverb PANTOS, "by all means" or "certainly". Christ is positive as to the character of His audience. The spirit of this is sanctified cynicism... "Next you are going to do this." PANTOS means that Christ is rolling his eyes at his audience.

The proverb or parable is one that even exists today in many forms.

Here is a simple enigma: There are two barbers in a one horse town... to whom do you go for the best haircut? The one with the worst haircut, for they must cut each other's hair.

It is often the fatal flaw of the physician that he cannot heal himself.

But Christ places these words in the mouths of His audience, that He should heal those people in His hometown, the same as what He did in Capernaum.

But Christ will not do it. He is not going to give them the satisfaction, because he knows that they have only a prurient interest in His miracles and healings.

Christ knows the character of His audience from their disrespectful bantering just when He was beginning to preach.

The way Christ quotes the fruit of their character is less than flattering. He sees them as narrow eyed people yearning for the satisfaction of their stimulation lust. The correlative pronoun HOSA gathers the healing at Capernaum to their desire to see the same in Nazareth.

But also the aorist imperative of POIEO means something. These people, Christ knows, are into the demand syndrome. "Do for us what you did in Capernaum" is the gist.

Now Christ has a message or moral based on His analysis of their character, and it is this: "No prophet is welcome in His hometown."

And it is true here, for this audience has been so rude to Christ that He could not even get His message out.

Christ was less than welcome, for while His audience was full of praise for how He read the scroll, they were less than interested in what He had to say about it.

In fact, if their true desire was to see a healing or a miracle, then these words of theirs are nothing more than flattery. They no doubt interrupted His message so that He would get on with the healing.

So, the people of Nazareth had no interest in God or the truth, but instead went to that synagogue only to satisfy their stimulation lust.

Now, some principles.

- The church is not about stimulation lust, but teaching, and inculcation in doctrine.
- Stimulation lust is a sign of the cosmic system. It reveals a bitterness toward God, a deep seated rejection of the truth, spiritual blindness, and a frantic search for happiness.
- As long as your soul is dominated by any form of lust, you cannot please God. You may attempt, in your state of deception, to flatter God into giving Him what you want, but you will not receive it
- First, you must repent, and leave behind your love for the cosmic system, and turn to God, and His grace plan.
- Then He will guide your life, into a life of balance, and give you what He thinks you will like. What God thinks you will like is best for you.

John 4:25,26, "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow."

This narrative goes back to 1 Kings 17 and 18...

In chapter seventeen, God gives Elijah power over the rain clouds of the sky. They will rain only by the word of Elijah. Ahab is king, and he is an evil, idol-worshipping hypocrite.

So, the drought is discipline, brought on by the Lord, who delegated the power of drought to Elijah.

Now something interesting... God commands Elijah to live outside of the land during this time. First, He is assigned to the brook Cherith. This is one of the tributary streams that run from the

Jordanian highlands in the East down to the Jordan River to the West. It is difficult to know exactly which one, but know this: it was in a wild and remote part of the country, near the same wilderness where Christ received His evidence testing.

The brook Cherith dried up, the Lord told Elijah to go to Zarephath, in Sidon. This is also outside the boundaries of the land.

Zarephath was an old, old city on the Mediterranean seacoast. It had been around more than seven hundred years at the time when Elijah came.

Although there was no positive volition at all in the land - and listen to this - no positive volition in the land, there was one woman there who wanted to hear the gospel.

Lesson: during the dispensation of Israel the gospel was still quite available to the Gentiles. The woman in Zarephath was a Gentile, and positive to the teaching of the Word.

The widow and her son were exceedingly poor, and when Elijah met her, she was gathering sticks or twigs so that they could have a meal.

But God worked a miracle through Elijah. When Elijah arrived at the widow's place, there was a little bit of flour in her bowl, and a little oil in her jar. But that never ran out as long as the drought continued.

Then also, the widow's son became sick, and almost to death, but Elijah healed him through the Lord's power.

The result of these two miracles was that the woman believed in Christ: "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." The miracles were validation for Elijah's God.

But meanwhile, back in the promised land, God has done no more miracles, and the drought marched on.

That time is brought forward by Christ, and applied not to the nation, nor to the region, but just to His home town. There will be no miracles here, because the people are full of unbelief.

This statement would have really chapped a crowd like this. Not only because they could care less

about God's word, but also because their stimulation lust had gone unappeased.

Just a mention of it here: when one category of lust is thwarted, then the truly unhappy will often shift their trend to another. It would happen here.

So Christ goes from being on the verge of announcing His Messiahship to telling these people that they will not get their Messiah. Hard stuff.

This is also a precursor to the age of the Gentiles. For the gospel went to the Jews in the land first. But when the Jews reject the Gospel, the primary focus of evangelism turns to the Gentiles.

John 4:27, "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

This one originates in 2 Kings 5:1-14. It has very much the same theme as the first illustration.

The description of Naaman, the gentile Assyrian, is in the very first verse, "Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man before his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper."

A little servant girl, who attended Naaman's wife, suggested that Naaman go to Elisha, in Samaria to be healed. This little girl was a Jew.

So Naaman went to Israel, to the city of Samaria, and pleaded with the king to be healed, but the king mourned that he could not do it.

Elisha heard of this Syrian, and so went to him, and told him to dip himself in the River Jordan seven times, and he would be healed.

After some bickering, Naaman did just that, and was healed by God. His skin came out of that water just the same as a child's.

And Naaman said this: Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now.

And, as Christ said, there were plenty of lepers in Israel at this time, but God cleansed only a Gentile.

This would have had much the same effect on the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth as the preceding statement. And they became mad as hornet.

With their stimulation lust unabated, they switch over to killer lust.

John 4:28-30, "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way."

The adverbial participle AKOUONTES reveals the time of their rage - it is simultaneous with their hearing Christ's two illustrations. Because this is a present participle, there is simultaneous action.

The adjective TAUTA tells us that they were filled with rage upon hearing both illustrations, because TAUTA is plural - 'these things'.

The substantive adjective PANTES communicates that every single person in that synagogue was filled with rage.

THUMOY is the noun for rage. It is the kind of rage that is ecstatic and unthinking. It describes the total control of emotion over the soul. Since the same word is often used of human passion, you could say that they were in an orgy of rage.

Furthermore, the aorist passive verb EPLESTHESAN reinforces the idea of ecstasy in rage. This comes from PIMPLEMI, a different verb than the usual PLEROO. This was a special verb when used with words of emotion. It was used with fear, enthusiasm, even the Old Testament kind of ecstatic filling of the Spirit.

This is a crowd of people. It is difficult to get an exact figure, but it is likely to be more than a hundred, even much more. And they are more than a crowd, for they have turned into a mob.

At the time that this was written, the city of Nazareth sat upon a hill. The present city is a little more down in the valley. This is a pretty small town, so the entire crown of the hill was not covered by the town. The crowd of the synagogue stood up, and took Jesus outside of the city limits.

There is no record of Christ's response, verbal or physical, during this crisis. It is unlikely that any of His disciples were present, though, so there were no other eyewitnesses than a mob and Himself.

You can be sure that Christ remained poised, even in the crisis, and did not fear or panic in any way. Such would be sinful, and that was something that He did not do.

It seems probable that in order to escape the synagogue Christ would have had to go through the crowd to the exit. There is a good chance that their synagogues had but one entrance.

So a procession of sorts goes through the streets, with a number of people leading Christ along to the brow of the Nazareth hill, and kill Him by throwing Him off the cliff there.

The verb KATAKREMNIZO is quite graphic, and means only one thing: to chuck someone off a cliff, so as to kill them. It may be like our English defenestrate, which means to throw someone out a window to kill them.

But it was not Christ's time yet. Note this same rage at the death of Christ more than two years later. There, the people and the Jewish leadership have constructed an insidious rationale. Here, they really have nothing but unrequited lust.

The Greek is interesting and yet ambiguous about Christ's escape. It says - AUTOS DE DIELTHON DIA MESOU AUTON EPOREUETO. Literally, 'but He Himself, going through their middle, was on His way.'

The intensive use of the personal pronoun AUTOS puts the success of this maneuver entirely upon the shoulders of Christ.

Poised for the right moment, Christ just turns and slips through their midst. The leaders may have turned to look down the cliff, while the rest of the people were still coming up, and could not see who it was.

It is significant to note that the people are full of rage, and in their ecstasy could be easily duped.

There is no mention at all of Divine intervention here, and Luke, the meticulous historian, gives full credit to Christ.

The verb POREUETO describes Christ's egress from the scene of peril. He did not run, but the imperfect tense portrays a steady pace, and one that was probably unhurried so as to keep unwanted attention at bay.

So the leaders turn to do their final deed, and Christ is gone! And they cannot see him for the mob. And the mob comes up to see the end of this mean man, only to find that He is no longer there! Matthew 4:13-16: "and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and to those who were sitting in the land shadow of death, upon them a light dawned."

Isaiah chapter nine has a larger context of the Messiah. It is not just this, but also several more verses that are Messianic. Later in the chapter, Isaiah tells of the wonderful counselor, and great ruler, who is the Messiah. In the first two verses things are more simple: it is the Messiah, a region, and a condition.

The region includes two areas, Zebulun and Naphtali.

The southern border of Naphtali runs west from the southernmost tip of the sea of Galilee, where it intersects with the river Jordan, until it gets to Mt. Tabor. From there it runs North for ten or fifteen miles, then West for another ten, then North again for forty or fifty miles, until it gets just past the Leontes river. From there it runs due East until it again intersects the Northern Jordan river, and then runs back down to the Sea of Galilee, and around it on the West side until it hits the southern tip again.

Zebulun occupies an area about twenty miles across, to the Southwest of Naphtali. It runs southwest until it intersects with the Kishon River.

The condition is really twofold. It has an initial condition, and a changed condition.

The initial condition is that of darkness. In fact, Christ modifies this quotation to include something from the Twenty Third Psalm.

The Twenty Third Psalm has that great line... "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

So they are the people who are sitting in darkness, and those who are sitting in the land of the shadow of death.

It means that in this region there is little, if any truth. Truth is the light that shines, and chases the darkness away.

It is the land of the shadow of death, because it is the land of the enemy, and his shadow lurks over

them all, tempting them to reject the love and light of God.

The final condition is that of great light, and the great light is the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ, the Messiah Himself.

The great light is the Messiah.

The dawning of the light is the dawning of the new era of the Messiah and His kingdom.
