



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Galilean Beginnings (Luke 4:14-44)

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And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 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. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*"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."*

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. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 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?" 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." And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 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, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 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." When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 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. But passing through their midst, he went away.

And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Ministry Focus

Jesus began in the synagogues of Judea following his baptism by John. Later, he moved to Galilee. Luke makes no mention of this period encompassing close onto one year. This period is covered by John, but he doesn't write of this for close on to another twenty years. This is another evidence of God's superintendence of the narrative¹. Obviously, Luke has a specific objective in the penning of his narrative, and this objective is "by the will of God".

The death of John the Baptizer influenced this decision to relocate to Galilee, obviously. (Proverbs 22:3/27:12—a prudent man foresees the evil...). Our current text finds him in Galilee.

Interestingly, the text says, "...a report went throughout the region about him...". Amazing the impact of word of mouth communication! Why Galilee? Why not continue in Judea, the center and hotbed of religious influence? Why Nazareth...and a Synagogue? Why not in the Public Square? Obviously, those who would possibly have "ears to hear" would be in the Synagogue, at least in Judea and Galilee.

Ears to hear? Does not every individual have ears to hear? In a biological sense; certainly, barring any physical impediments but, in a psychological sense, not always. (Having observed conversation and discussion on the Floor of The House, my conclusion would be: not on your life. It often appears those on the Floor are waiting a turn to speak versus listening to what is being said, at the moment.) Nothing has changed.

Had he continued in Judea, the issue, undoubtedly, would have been viewed as political. Hence, his withdrawal to Galilee. But, spiritually, the focus of ministry in Galilee does emphasize the inclusion of the Gentiles. Galilee was referred to as **Galilee of the Gentiles**² though the Jewish population did appear to dominate. This move suggests the Lord Jesus was operating in terms of the big picture! (FYI-Do You and I?)

The Providence of God is evident as he enters the synagogue: why hand him the scroll of Isaiah? Pragmatically, it might well have been the next scheduled reading. But, even if such is the case, how is it God engineered Jesus' arrival in Nazareth at this particular Synagogue and just in time for the reading of the Isaianic comments? Again, an evidence of God's Providence? A sparrow cannot fall nor a hair from your head without the will of God³. Jesus' ministry focus was not political, but spiritual, at this juncture in the history of redemption.

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAY @ 8:00 AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING

Pennsylvania

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His message has political implications as the leaven of the kingdom spreads into politics, the arts, etc.; but at this juncture in history, the impact is religious. He came to accomplish redemption⁴. First things first: one comes before two; two comes before three, etc...

Why religious? His ministry and that of His disciples will represent the clash of Two Covenants: the abolition of the Old and the Inauguration of the New. Clash? Certainly: for Jeremiah said the New would not be like the Old, but be distinctly different⁵.

Talk about an implicit and existential threat to the establishment! ☹ For hundreds of years the religious establishment labored to develop for themselves a secure spot in the “way things are”. To fall back on a vernacular phrase, they have “made peace with reality”. Recall their later concern in John 11:48? Power corrupts and the system has been corrupted, big time!⁶

What He introduces ultimately would have awesome and unfolding political implications, but not immediately within the understanding of 1st century Judea or within the Roman Empire. God is definitely not in a hurry! When leaven is introduced into a lump of dough nothing happens immediately. Time and heat are the necessary ingredients. But, once introduced, time and heat are the normal experiences of any and every society.

Granted, the synagogue teachings were deeply influenced by Babylonian concepts such that by the time of Jesus, the Old Testament was interpreted through the grid of the then developing Talmud. Remember Jesus’ observations in the sermon on the Mount-“...you have heard it said...but I say unto you...” (Matt. 5)

Today, Judaism is anchored in Talmud, and most especially the Babylonian versus the Jerusalem Talmud. The Old Testament-Torah- is highly venerated but has little to do with the system. Reliance is founded upon rabbinical teachings and the Rabbis steeped in Talmud. Just as we take every thought captive to scripture (Isaiah 8:20 & 2 Corinthians 10:3-5), the observant Jew takes every thought captive to the Babylonian Talmud via the teachings of the Rabbis.

Application:

Do you believe the truth and power of Kingdom teaching and/or principles? Are these truths woven into legislation you offer?

Be assured both Babylonian Judaism and Radical Islam seek to do just that. In fact, they have done that for the past 100 years. For example, we are seeing the intrusion of Shariah law in parts of our nation. Sadly, it would seem they are presently more effective than any explicit Christian influence.

Years ago, Robert George wrote on **The Clash of Orthodoxies**⁷ simply stating the obvious: asserted orthodoxies ALWAYS clash. Orthodoxy means “correct opinion or teaching”. One cannot argue A is non-A. Such an assertion leads to an inevitable clash which we have been experiencing for the past century. Pragmatically: oil and water do not mix. A is not non-A.

Rejection in Nazareth

Messiah has arrived and opened His case from the very pages of their sacred texts. The response in **Galilee of the Gentiles**-rejection by the local Jewish leadership and, murderous rejection!

Interestingly, their initially response is positive-“is this not Joseph’s son” and they ask for local demonstrations of his miraculous powers. In response, Jesus draws their attention to Elijah’s ministry and the implications of God’s electing prerogative and their response mirrors the lines of that spoken by Ezekiel⁸. Sovereignly, Jesus passes through their midst. One wonders at their subsequent reaction?

Ministry in Capernaum

Capernaum is Peter’s hometown and here Jesus demonstrates an extent of His power over demons and disease. The response of the general populace is one of awe, not only by virtue of what he does, but by virtue of what he says. He speaks as one *having* authority, and not as the scribes who relied upon quoting other authorities. The scribes quote an authority- Jesus speaks with authority. (Isaiah 11:1-5 comes to mind and may have risen in the psyche of those listening and observing.)

The stage is now set: Jesus has gathered his band of disciples. They have observed his ministry in Galilee and experienced the response of both the general populace and local religious leadership and it is time for the next phase. Jesus begins to move south into Judea. Out of these disciples Jesus will select twelve who will be known as his Apostles, i.e. Apostles of Jesus.

¹ 2 Peter 1:19-21

² Matthew 4:15

³ Matthew 10:29, 30

⁴ Luke 19:10

⁵ Jeremiah 31:31-34

⁶ Mark 7:7-13

⁷ Robert P. George, (Clash of Orthodoxies), ISO Books, 2001

⁸ Ezekiel 33:31-33