

# OpenTheo

## Early Galilean Ministry (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this segment of his teachings, Steve Gregg discusses the early Galilean ministry of Jesus, focusing on Luke 13-14 and John 4. Gregg notes that in John 4, Jesus encounters a woman from Samaria, who testifies about Jesus to the people of Sychar. Gregg explains that the man mentioned in Luke 13 who takes issue with Jesus not performing signs and wonders, may have worked for Herod's court. Gregg also notes that Jesus appears to have publicly entertained guests in the morning and explains the significance of Jubilee year in prophecy.

### **Transcript**

Last time we were looking at that passage in John chapter 4, which tells of Jesus' encounter with the woman of Samaria at the well there. And you will recall that the reason Jesus was in Samaria was because, having been in Judea and having heard that the Pharisees were hearing reports about His popularity, He apparently judged it necessary, or we should put it more specifically, the Father, who was giving orders to Jesus, judged it necessary for Jesus to transfer His venue of ministry to Galilee in the north. And this began the great Galilean campaign, which lasted for probably more than a year, almost certainly more than a year, and where Jesus enjoyed the greatest amount of popularity and publicity, and where the majority of His miracles were performed, and many of His important teachings were given during that time.

This is the shift from what we've called the year of obscurity in Jesus' ministry to the year of popularity. The first year, approximately, has really not been occupied by very much activity that's on record. After His baptism and being tempted in the wilderness, we read of Him collecting a few disciples, Philip and Nathanael, and He met the fishermen also, though He had not yet called them to follow Him.

We read of His turn watering the wine in Cana, and then cleansing the temple in Jerusalem, having conversation with Nicodemus there. Apart from that, we don't really have any specific stories about that first year. Very little is done, and most of what is done is done somewhat obscurely, with the exception, of course, of His cleansing the temple.

That was not an obscure act at all, but that seems to have transformed His ministry into a public one, and the majority of His public ministry, during the more popular part of it, was conducted in the northern region where He grew up, which was Galilee. His visit with the woman at the well was en route to Galilee, and it's in this session today that we will read of His early actions upon arriving there in that region. I'd like you to turn first of all to Luke 4, and we're also going to take some material from the end of John 4 today.

Luke chapter 4, verses 14 and 15 says, Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region, and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. Then we read of His coming to Nazareth. It's something we'll talk about in a few moments.

We have something else to insert, however. Now, Jesus, it says, came, returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Luke's emphasis on the Spirit in Jesus' life began in chapter 2, probably, but here in chapter 4, verse 1, as he tells of Jesus going to be tempted in the wilderness, he says in 4.1, Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Then we read of His temptation there, which is some distance past in our studies, but notice, He was filled with the Holy Spirit after His baptism, and He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and in verse 14 of Luke 4, we're told that when His temptation was over, He returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Now, you can see that Luke, between verses 13 and 14, has skipped over entirely the material we've been studying in John chapter 2 and 3 and 4 up to this point. The synoptic Gospels all do this.

They skip over that material that John alone records, and they skip to the most important public ministry of Jesus, which was the Galilean. It was John's desire, apparently, to fill in the missing parts that the other Gospels had left out. Now, Luke does not mention this here in Luke 4.14, but Matthew and Mark both do in their parallel passages.

They mention that Jesus coming to Galilee was after John was put into prison. Luke doesn't mention that particular fact, but we get that from the parallels in both Mark 1.14 and the parallel in Matthew 4 also. Now, having read of Jesus coming to Galilee here, the next thing Luke tells about is His going to Nazareth, His own hometown, and preaching in the synagogue there.

However, chronologically, prior to His going to Nazareth, it would appear He went back to Cana, where He had turned water into wine. For this story, we have to turn to John chapter 4, and then we'll be turning back to Luke after we take a few verses here. Where we left off in John chapter 4 was at verse 42, where the people of the city of Sychar in Samaria had come out to hear Jesus because of the woman's testimony, and they had become impressed with their own exposure to Jesus and had announced in verse 42, Now we believe not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that He is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

We can see in verse 40 of John 4 that they had urged Jesus to stay with them for two days, or they urged Him to stay with them, and He did stay for two days. And now at verse 43, where we resume, it says, Now after the two days, it means the two days He spent with the Samaritans in Sychar. Now after the two days, He departed from there and went to Galilee, which brings us up to speed with what we just read in Luke 4.14. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast, for they also had gone to the feast. Now it's a bit perplexing, this statement of verse 44. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

In view of the fact that Galilee was, at least in one sense, His own country, that's where He grew up. It seems strange that He would go to Galilee because He said a prophet is without honor in His own country. It sounds as if He's going back home because He said there's no honor for Him there.

Now also that John follows this up in verse 45 by pointing out that He was honored when He got to Galilee. He got there and they received Him. They were excited about His arrival.

They'd seen what He had done in Jerusalem and were glad that He had now come to do some of His miracles and teach up in their area. It becomes difficult to know what is meant in verse 44 by His own country. Now in Luke 4, don't turn there, we'll turn there a little later, when Jesus went to Nazareth, we read in Luke 4 that they rejected Him in His hometown.

And Jesus there said that a prophet is not without honor except in His own village or His own country or among His own people. And there His own people clearly were the people of Nazareth, a village in Galilee where Jesus had grown up. So in Luke 4, we will find this same statement that a prophet does not receive honor in his own place, in his own home, and we will see it applied in Luke 4 to Nazareth, the place where Jesus grew up.

But here in John 4, 44, it would appear that His own country refers to Judea and Jerusalem because, I mean, that's the only thing that explains it. He went to Galilee because He was not accepted in Jerusalem. And when He went to Galilee, He was accepted there.

Now Jesus' statement that a prophet is not accepted or not honored in his own country must refer to His character as the Messiah. The Messiah was surely to rule in Jerusalem. The Messiah was sent to the Jews of Judea.

He was of the tribe of Judah. The Judeans were of His tribe. The Galileans mostly were not.

Though He had grown up in Galilee, He had been born in Judea, in the city of Bethlehem of Judea. And as Messiah, His principal ministry was to fulfill the prophecies of the Son of David coming to rule in Jerusalem over His people and so forth, which were the Jews. In one sense, it is true that Nazareth in Galilee was His hometown and that He grew up there, but really, in a more ultimate sense, since He was born in Judea and since His ministry as Messiah would be principally significant toward, at least the Jews would understand it, toward the people of Jerusalem and Judah, that region was His home, was the prophet's own country, as it were, was the Messiah's land.

And so it seems that Jesus, depending on how He wished to view His earthly associations, could refer to Judea and Jerusalem as His own country, since He was the Messiah and the promise was that He would come and rule in Jerusalem. Or, if He wanted to speak more particularly of where He grew up, He could refer to Nazareth as His own land, His own home and country and so forth. Anyway, that is a bit perplexing here, but I think we can work our way through that.

Now, it says in verse 46, So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine, which we were told in chapter 2 of John was His first miracle. We have read of additional miracles in between that He did in Jerusalem, although we haven't read any specific ones. We read that people believed in Him because of the signs, chapter 2, verse 23, when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, 223.

During the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. What signs He did, we do not know. But His turning water into wine was the only miracle He had ever done in Galilee, in Cana.

He had done others in Jerusalem down to the south. Now, it says in verse 46, This is the town where He had made water into wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

Now, Capernaum was, from what I have read in commentaries, I've read different things, but apparently 16 miles east by northeast of Cana. Jesus was in Cana, and this nobleman came from Capernaum about 16 miles away, approximately five hours walk. That may be important to consider later on in the story, okay? When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

Then Jesus said to him, Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe. The nobleman said to Him, Sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus said to him, Go your way, your son lives.

So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better.

And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, Your son lives. And he himself believed in his whole household.

This again is the second sign that Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee. That's a strange way of wording it in verse 54, but what that must mean is it's the second sign He did in Galilee, and He did it on this day when He came out of Judea. But anyway, John has given us enough information in previous chapters to know that He had been to Jerusalem in between His first and second sign in Cana, and also that He had done some signs down in Jerusalem.

Anyway, that's not an important thing for us to sort out. Let's look at some of the details of the story. This man who came on behalf of his son was a nobleman, and scholars have fairly agreed that a nobleman refers to an officer of Herod's court.

There were, of course, various kinds of political and religious offices that people could hold in that society at the time. And if they were in Judea, a person might be a member of the Sanhedrin. They might be a member of the priesthood.

They might be a chief priest. They might be a ruler of a synagogue. If you were in Galilee, a person of office might be in the religious world, a ruler in the synagogue.

Or they might be a government official, as is the case here, because a ruler of the synagogue would not be, because of that, be called a nobleman. And this man was apparently a man attached to Herod's court, which is the other alternative. If you were a political official, if you had rank in the political realm in Galilee, it would be because of association with the Roman ruler there, Herod Antipas.

And so this man was apparently a man attached to the Herodian court. He heard that Jesus had come to Galilee, and although Jesus was five hours walk away, the man made the trip because his son was sick. Now, making this trip in itself for a man who probably had government business to perform and so forth, to take a half a day out to make this walk would be an exhibit of some degree of faith.

If he had his doubts at any serious level that Jesus could heal or would heal his son, he probably would not have wasted his time. We have to assume, I think, he was very desperate, his son must have been extremely ill, and the man must have had the conviction that Jesus could do something about it, which makes Jesus remark his first answer to the man strange, in a sense. Verse 48, Jesus said to him, unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.

Now, the word *people* there is in italics in the New King James, because it's not in the Greek, and in a more literal version, it just says, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. Now, the reason this sounds strange is because if Jesus was talking to

the man as an individual, Jesus seems to have misjudged him, because the man believed Jesus without seeing a sign or a wonder. We read this when Jesus says in verse 50, go your way, your son lives, so the man believed the word.

He didn't see anything, he just believed. Therefore, Jesus saying, unless you see signs and wonders, you won't believe, if he was applying it to this man as an individual, Jesus seems to have missed his judgment on the guy, which doesn't settle well with us, since we don't believe that Jesus missed his predictions or judged wrongly individuals. The reason the word people is supplied here in verse 48 in italics is because you, which is the word just before people there, is plural in the Greek.

Unlike the English, the Greek and many other languages have different forms of the word you, whether it's singular or plural. In English, it's always the same form, you, whether we're talking about many or few, but in the Greek, he uses the plural, unless you, plural. So the New King James translators, in order to clarify that, put in the word people, and that's quite correct to do, because he's not saying that this man alone is being judged by this comment, but the man represents a class of people who are generally of this attitude, people who seek after a sign or else they will not believe.

Now, which class was this? Well, he could be speaking to the person just as a Jew, you Jews in general, you know, unless you see signs and wonders, you won't believe. Paul said something about the Jews similar to that in 1st Corinthians chapter 1 in verse 22. 1st Corinthians 1 22, Paul said, for Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom.

Jews are inclined to desire signs, he says, before they will believe, whereas Greeks like to see the good sense in it, they like to see it argued philosophically. But Jesus might have that in mind when he says, you people, unless you see signs and wonders. He may not be meaning this man is in this class exactly, he is a Jew, and Jews in general are that way.

The man himself could be an exception and prove to be, but you people, you plural, could refer to Jews in general, of which this man was one, it would seem. Another consideration is that he might have been speaking to him as part of the class of Herodians, those attached to the court of Herod. We know, for example, that Herod was personally a man who wanted to see signs from Jesus.

We're told that when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod for trial, that Herod was glad that Jesus had been sent to him because Herod had heard about Jesus and had desired to see some signs from him. But Jesus did not humor him and did not give him any signs. He was silent, didn't speak a word, didn't do a thing, and finally disgusted Herod sent him back to Pilate, where he was finally condemned to be killed.

Now Herod was disposed in this way. It's possible that those of his court shared his skepticism and cynicism, either naturally or just to be politically correct. They might

have taken on Herod's attitude with reference to Jesus.

Although, of course, at this point in time, Jesus didn't have much a reputation. Herod probably didn't even know Jesus existed. Nonetheless, Herod and the Herodians might have had this general disposition about things in general.

Maybe they'd had rejected John the Baptist. Herod had put John in prison. John had never done any signs.

This is specifically stated later on in the Gospel of John. John did no signs. Therefore, perhaps Herod would have believed if there had been signs in John's ministry, and maybe the Herodians in general had already exhibited, before Jesus even came to their attention, this propensity to reject the Word of God as preached by John, when there were no signs to attest it.

And Jesus might have been speaking to this man as a representative of that class, the Herodians, who, you know, would not believe without a sign, and who were addicted to signs. Either as a Jew or, more specifically, as a Herodian, that is a Jew attached to Herod's court, Jesus spoke to this man as representative of a class who tended to be skeptical unless they saw signs. Now, as it turns out, this man happened to be an exception to his class, because he did not require a sign in order to believe, although we are told that when he did find his son healed, although it says he believed the Word in verse 50, when his son was found to be healed, verse 53 says, he himself believed in his whole household.

So, his faith apparently increased upon seeing his son was healed, upon seeing the sign, actually. You know, John has already, and will again in his gospel, made a distinction between believing and believing. Now, that might sound like I just said it wrong, because what difference could there possibly be between believing and believing, since those are obviously both the same word? Well, the word can be applied to more than one thing.

You know, the Bible says that the demons believe and tremble, but they're not saved, obviously, and James tells us that a faith that doesn't produce works is a dead faith. Paul tells us that it's not circumcision or uncircumcision that mattered to God, but a faith that works through love. There is obviously a kind of faith that doesn't.

There's a kind of faith that people profess to have, and no doubt truly do have, like that of the devil. They believe Jesus is the Son of God, it just doesn't affect the way they live. It just doesn't change anything.

It doesn't make a difference in their life, and therefore, it doesn't make a difference to God either. And John has already given some indicator that believing in Jesus can happen at more than one level. For example, back in John chapter 2, we already earlier looked at verse 23, where it says, now when he was in Jerusalem, John 2 23, at the Passover,

during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did.

But Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew all men, he knew it was in a man. He apparently didn't trust them entirely. They had some degree of belief, but it was not exactly a belief that he could trust them to be loyal in.

If you look at John chapter 8, in John chapter 8 and verse 30 and 31, as he spoke these words, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him, if you abide in my word, as if you're obedient to what I say, you are my disciples indeed, as opposed to in pretense. They are really his disciples, and not just pretending to be, or not just falling short of true conversion, if they are obedient to his words and continue to be.

Short of that, their belief is not that of a true disciple. They believed, that's what it says specifically of them in verses 30 and 31. These are people who believed him, but not necessarily were they all disciples indeed.

Obviously you can believe at a level other than a saving level. By the way, the same people in John 8 later on go on to tell Jesus he was a Samaritan had a demon, and yet these are the people, we don't have any shift noted by John in telling the story, any shift of the audience from those that he first spoke to who believed in him, and those who are saying, he later says to them, you have your father the devil in verse 44. So it's quite obvious that John would have us know that faith of a saving sort is not the only kind of faith there is.

People can believe at a certain level and believe more, or believe more thoroughly at a later time or a different level. It's possible that John is bringing this out about the nobleman also here in John chapter 4, where the man did believe in verse 50, but he believed again or more in verse 53. So Jesus certainly didn't miss the mark entirely even with this guy, that his belief increased when he saw a sign, and Jesus said, unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

Now Jesus said that to the man in verse 48, John 4 48, implying that, you know, you just want to see a sign don't you? And the man, and maybe this was testing the man to see if the guy had more noble motives than that. The man was concerned about his son. We read in verse 47, his son was at the point of death.

The guy didn't have time to worry about carnival tricks. He wasn't concerned about signs particularly. He was concerned about the survival of his child.

And the man said to him, sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus said to him, go your way, your son lives. So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.

Now another indication that the guy had a fair degree of belief at this point was that he



didn't get home until the next day. In fact, we read in verse 51, and as he was now going down, meaning back down to his home in Capernaum, his servants met him and told him your son lives. He asked when that happened, and they told him the seventh hour.

It happens to be the same hour that the previous day Jesus had said your son lives. Now the seventh hour, again we've talked about I think whether John used the Roman or the Jewish reckoning. It's almost certain he used the Roman reckoning.

Tom pointed out to me the other day from his study Bible, it mentioned that they measured the hours from both midnight and from noon just as we do. So the seventh hour could have been 7 a.m. or it could be 7 p.m. 7 in the evening. We do not know which.

Given no evidence one way or the other, I guess I'm inclined to take it as the morning hour, but maybe there's no reason to do so. We're just not told. In any case, it was the next day before the man met his servants.

Now either, let's suppose he, it was 7 a.m. when Jesus commanded or stated that the boy was healed. Why would it take till the next day for the man to get home in a five-hour walk? If Jesus said this at 7 a.m., the man could have gotten home by that evening, and yet when he got home, they said it was yesterday at 7 a.m. that your boy was healed, and he said, oh, that's when Jesus spoke to me. Obviously, it was 24 hours between the time Jesus spoke the word, well, not a full 24 hours necessarily, but it was the next day, let's put it that way, it was the next day that the man came home.

Now if Jesus had spoken the word at 7 a.m., that means the guy didn't go directly home. He may have taken his leisure. He may have waited around in Cana, did some business while he was there, hard to say.

If that is true, it would certainly speak well for his faith, because when he had left home, his son was at the point of death, and there would be nothing more urgent upon his heart but to find out if his son had died yet or was, you know, improving or whatever, but if he believed Jesus' word, where Jesus said, well, your son's gonna be okay, then he could just rest and say, oh, well, I know he'll be better when I get home, so I'll just take it easy here. That would take a fair amount of faith. If last time you'd seen your son, he was on his deathbed, and this is possibly the case.

On the other hand, if it was 7 p.m. when Jesus spoke these words, then even if the man went directly home from there, it would be after midnight when he got home, and therefore it would still be possible that they would say, yeah, this happened yesterday. It was the next day when he got home, even if he went directly back, and it is, it would be conceivable since 7 p.m. would be, you know, the sun would be down, that he would just lodge in Cana, even if he was eager to go back and see his son, he would leave the next morning. Now, this very thing suggests to me, I think that it was probably 7 in the

morning, though, that the sun was down at 6. The end of the Jewish day was at 6 in the evening, and it seems unlikely that Jesus was still publicly entertaining guests after sundown.

That was when people, I mean, there weren't streetlights. I mean, people in old days went to bed at sundown, if they could, as much as possible, because it was, you know, lighting was a problem, and I mean, it was expensive to light things, and Jesus probably wasn't having the multitudes over for an hour after sundown. Probably the people went home to their meals and to their beds.

Anyway, we can't determine this for certain, but it seems more likely that the man approached Jesus at 7 in the morning, which would be first thing in the morning, the sun being up, people would be out and about, rather than at 7 in the evening, when people would ordinarily be at home in bed or preparing to be in bed. So, anyway, we don't know for sure, but if it was 7 in the morning, as I suggested, that means that he didn't even go directly home. He waited around at least a few hours, if not overnight, to go home, and that would suggest that he had a tremendous peace about his son's situation, based upon Jesus' promise here.

Now, the servants told him what hour the boy had begun to mend, and in verse 53, it says, so the father knew that it was the same hour in which Jesus said to him, your son lives, and he himself believed, and his whole household. So, the whole family came to believe, and this is Jesus' second sign in Galilee. Now, later in the Gospels, and I wish I, if I'd thought of it, I would have looked it up so I could give you the exact reference.

I might be able to find it anyway, but I believe it's in Luke, though I couldn't swear by it. The Gospels tell us that there were certain women that helped support Jesus financially, later in his Galilean ministry. I could kick myself for not having it at my fingertips here.

If I'd just taken a few moments, I could have looked it up, but there's several women who apparently had some degree of substance, that is financial substance, who provided Jesus and his disciples with support, financial support, and one of them is said to have been the wife of a Herodian official, and though his name was Chusa, spelled C-H-U-S-A, I believe, the wife of Chusa, and Chusa was of Herod's household. Gee, I just wish I had that reference here at my fingertips, but anyway, bearing that in mind, it is considered possible, and maybe even probable, that this Chusa, whose wife later followed with other women around with Jesus and supported him financially, Chusa may have been this nobleman we're talking about. Yes, thank you very much.

Luke 8, 3. I'm glad that someone, I knew if I kept, you know, chattering about it long enough, someone would find it in the meantime. Luke 8, 3. And Joanna, well, verse 2 and 3. Certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven demons, and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for him from their

substance, that is, who financially supported him. Now Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward.

Now, of course, Herod may have had a great number of stewards, and there might have been more than one of them that became believers in Jesus. Therefore, we can't be certain. But we do read here in John 4 that this Herodian, this man attached to Herod's staff, became a believer along with his household, understandably, of course, because the son who was at the point of death was instantly recovered, or began to recover and did recover, when Jesus uttered the word.

And as a result of this, this would explain why Chusa, if this man was Chusa, we don't know this to be true, but if this man who is unnamed in John 4 happens to be the Chusa of Luke 8, 3, that would explain why this Herodian steward would allow his wife to go about and help bankroll Jesus and the disciples. You know, the Herodians in general were not on Jesus' side. They probably did not believe in him in great numbers, though there might have been more than one that did.

But one would have to find an explanation for the fact that Herod's steward was motivated to allow his wife to take from their family finances and support Jesus and the disciples. If he was, in fact, the man whose son Jesus had healed on this occasion, that might provide the motive for that, and that's only a guess. It's not a bad one, but it's a guess.

Okay, now we go to Luke chapter 4, and we'll pick up chronologically what comes next. And that is the other place where Jesus talks about a prophet not being accepted in his own country, in his own town, which is in Luke 4, beginning at verse 16. So he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

And he was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Then he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he began to say to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

So all bore witness to him and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is this not Joseph's son? And he said to them, You will surely say this proverb to me, Physician, heal yourself. Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your country.

Then he said, Assuredly I say to you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell

you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land. But to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath in the region of Sidon, a woman who was a widow.

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. Then all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city. And they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, and that they might throw him down over the cliff.

Then passing through the midst of them, he went his way. Now his coming to Nazareth is also mentioned in both Matthew and Mark. However, it is generally assumed by scholars that the visit to Nazareth mentioned in Matthew and Mark was later than this one, that there were actually two visits.

This is not certain. Some would understand them to be the same visit. There is a similar reaction in both cases, only there's no mention in Matthew and Mark of there being an attempt on his life as there was in this case.

It's in Mark chapter 6 verses 1 through 6 that we read of his coming to Nazareth in that gospel, and in Matthew 13 verses 54 through 58. So Mark 6, the opening six verses in Matthew 13, the last few verses of Matthew 13, both tell a story, obviously the same story. Matthew and Mark are talking about the same story as each other.

Whether they're talking about the same story as we have here in Luke or not is a matter of dispute. Some believe he only went once to Nazareth, some think twice. Either point could be argued, all right? But there's much more detail given about this particular one.

He goes into the synagogue, as was his custom. So he already had developed a bit of a pattern, probably in Cana where he had first been, going into the synagogues on Saturday and teaching there. Now you might wonder, how could a man without credentials, not an ordained minister, just walk into the synagogue, a relatively unknown person at this time, and just kind of walk up and take the scripture and take the pulpit? Well, the synagogues, there was a synagogue in every city that had more than 10 adult male Jews, and it's quite obvious that if the city had only about 10 adult male Jews, they'd have a synagogue, but they would not likely have one who was a trained theologian or rabbi.

I mean, rabbis didn't comprise 10% of the population, which would be necessary if every synagogue that had so few Jews in it was going to have a rabbi. Every synagogue did, however, have a president, that is, somebody who was sort of the master of ceremonies or presided over the synagogue service, and they were always happy if some visiting rabbi came along, even if he was not a man of great reputation or that they'd known,

just someone more than the ordinary Jew who had something to say, who would like to speak from the pulpit. That is why Paul, of course, in his journeys, whenever he went, you know, to a new area, he just went to the synagogue, and he almost always was invited to speak there, even though he had never been there before, and they didn't know him personally.

He had been a rabbi. He probably introduced himself as such when he met them at the door. I'm a rabbi, and you know, if you'd like, I'd be glad to speak, and they asked him to do so, because not all the synagogues had a president preacher.

Now, Jesus, you know, he may have, when he visited the synagogue, he may have introduced himself as a rabbi or one who was willing to share something from the pulpit, and therefore they gave him the pulpit. It may be even by this time, since we were told that the people of Galilee had heard about things he had done in Jerusalem, that people were eager to hear what he had to say, and so just showing up at the synagogue guaranteed that he would be asked to speak in the pulpit. In any case, there's no difficulty in seeing how Jesus would have the opportunity to speak in these synagogues.

Almost anyone could, if they were willing to. They didn't have to be a trained theologian or a recognized rabbi to do so. Now, it says that Jesus was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah, and he opened the book, and it tells us what passage he opened to.

The passage is, in our book of Isaiah, as it's broken in chapters and verses, it's chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. The book of Isaiah had not yet been broken down into verses, as it has now, so of course we refer to the passages Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2. They wouldn't have referred to it that way. He just opened to this passage. It says he found the place where it was written.

It was a deliberate opening to this particular passage. Now, the synagogues had, just like some of the liturgical churches have, a liturgical, what do they call it, it's a yearly reading of Scripture. There's a name for that.

I know what it is, it just eludes me at the moment. But there's a yearly schedule of reading. You're going to read these passages on these particular Sundays.

The churches have this, the Missal or whatever. But the synagogues had their regular readings charted out for several years in a row, and every particular Saturday, a particular Scripture was scheduled for reading. It is possible that Jesus happened, or maybe it was no coincidence, but happened to come to the synagogue on this occasion, when this Scripture was on schedule for the reading.

That would allow for the wording that he found the Scripture. I mean, if he knew, okay, I've got to read this passage, I'll find it. He finds it and reads it.

It's also possible that Jesus departed from the regular reading, no one can say, and he

just wanted to read this Scripture because he had something to say about it. The Scripture is, as we see, a messianic Scripture. Not every prophecy in the Old Testament is, but there are hundreds of them that are.

And Jesus was able to use this Scripture as an introduction to himself, to these people. After he read the Scripture, it says in verse 20, he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. It was Jewish custom that when the Scripture was read, people would stand in reverence.

But when the Scripture was finished being read, the rabbi, in order to give, to make a difference between the Scriptures and his own words, he would sit and then begin to expound. So he'd stand for the reading of Scripture, then they put away the Scripture and he'd sit down and begin to make his comments. Jesus followed this custom, even though his comments were more authoritative than the Old Testament Scriptures he read.

He apparently didn't want to scandalize them on this occasion, so he just went ahead and followed the custom. He sat down, it says, and the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he began to say to them, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Now that's the first part of his sermon.

He reads the Scripture and having sat down and put the book away, he says, This Scripture has been fulfilled today in your hearing. Well, what did the Scripture say? And in what way was it fulfilled that particular day? Well, the Scripture said, Isaiah the prophet said, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Now by the way, everything in this Scripture from Isaiah, in verses 18 and 19 here, the prophet himself could have meant it about himself.

That's one of the things that's difficult about some of the Messianic prophecies, both in the Psalms and in some of the prophets, is that a prophecy which is actually the Messiah speaking is not clearly delineated by the author as such. I mean, the author, Psalm 22, one of the most famous Messianic Psalms, about they pierced my hands and feet and all that, that Psalm, you know, the entire thing is written as if David's talking about himself. An unsuspecting reader who knew nothing about its fulfillment would think that this was just David talking about his own experience, but David was a type of Christ, and therefore many of the things he said about himself had a significance that extended beyond his own experience to the Messiah, and that converted his statements into Messianic prophecies.

Likewise, Isaiah was a type of Christ in some respects. In this, we don't have time to examine all the ways that this is so, but there are a number of places where we can see this to be so in Isaiah's writings. Apparently in this case too, because what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 61, every word of it could be applied to himself, the prophet.

He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Prophets of God generally were. He came with an announcement of good news.

There's no prophet in the Old Testament that had more of the good news than Isaiah did. Isaiah had good news for his generation. He also had good news in the more distant future sort, because Isaiah predicted more about Jesus than any other prophet did, and there's more about the gospel and more about the kingdom of God and the Messiah in Isaiah's book than in any other book of the prophets.

Psalms has more, but that's not one of the books of the prophets. Psalms actually speaks more about the Messiah than Isaiah does. Psalm is the book of the Old Testament that is most frequently quoted in the New.

Isaiah comes second. So Isaiah himself was a preacher of good news. He preached, you know, the gospel of the Messiah, but he also had good news for his own day.

His message was one of deliverance at a time when the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem, that without any help from Egypt that God would save the people if they just trust in him. His message was sort of a precursor of the gospel itself, that God would save his people if they didn't resort to their own works, their own flesh, and if they just trust in his salvation. That's essentially what Isaiah said to Hezekiah, and Hezekiah followed his counsel and was delivered.

In fact, the name Isaiah means the salvation of Jehovah, just like the name Jesus means Jehovah is salvation. It's quite similar in meaning. Anyway, Isaiah could have said all these things and they would have applied to his ministry.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Now, while any of this could apply to Isaiah, obviously there's much of it that applies far better to Jesus than it does to Isaiah.

That's true of many of the Messianic prophecies. They, in one sense, seem to apply to the Prophet himself or to some contemporary, but far better. They are fulfilled in Jesus himself.

Now, the prophecy here is framed in terminology reminiscent of the Jubilee year. When it says to preach deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed, these are actually phrases that are taken out of the Old Testament with reference to the Jubilee. That's what they were supposed to do, to proclaim liberty throughout the land.

And when he says in verse 19 to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, as opposed to day of the Lord or hour or whatever, the year of the acceptable year of the Lord, it certainly has the hint of the Jubilee year, the acceptable year of deliverance and liberty

to captives. You remember that every 50th year was to be regarded a Jubilee and was to be commemorated by the canceling of all debts, the release of all slaves from captivity. And this was good for the poor, of course, who had become indebted but had not yet paid off all their debts.

Their debts were cancelled. It was good news for the poor. It was a setting of liberty of those who were bound.

It was a wonderful proclamation of freedom and deliverance. That's what the Jubilee was all about. And the Jews were supposed to commemorate this in the societal, social sense every 50th year.

Now we don't have record in the Old Testament of the Jews ever really doing this. They may have or they may not have, knowing their tendency to neglect to keep the law of God, we might be safe in concluding they never really did what God said to do about this. Though they may have on some occasions and it simply may have missed being recorded.

But the point is, whether or not the Jews ever did what they were told to do in this, the law itself was to stand as a type and a shadow and the observance of it, if they ever kept it, was to be a type and a shadow of something spiritual. Something that Jesus was here to say is coming on us now.