

## Luke Chapter 4 - John Karmelich

1. Let me open with a question: How does one start to make a difference for God? Does one just do what we feel like doing and hope it makes a difference? Are we required to do whatever others tell us to do? How well, for example do we have to know our bible before we begin? What about sin issues in our life? Do we have to be perfect or major sin-free in order to start? Do we just do something and go at it?
  - a) Consider these questions, as we will read in this chapter of the start of Jesus' ministry. To state the obvious, we're not Jesus and we are not called to do all that He did. At the same time, it is important to notice patterns for us to learn about whatever God has called us to do based on how Jesus started His ministry. With all of that said my lesson title is simply, "How Jesus started His ministry and what we can learn from that". The issue is not only what we can learn about Jesus here, but how we can apply what He is doing to our lives.
  - b) Coming back to my opening questions: We don't have to be perfect to make a difference for God, however we do have to be perfectly forgiven and make the decision to turn from sin as that's the best way to live out our lives and be a good witness for Him. We are then free to start our own ministry if we feel lead to do so, or join some other ministry that we desire. I also understand that we need to be compensated in order to survive. However, if one is doing what one enjoys doing, I find that God makes a way for us to be provided for while we do make a difference for Him. In fact, that is one of the issues that we'll get into as we read about Jesus literally battling Satan in this chapter. I bring that up here as it teaches us how to deal with spiritual warfare as we make a difference for Him.
  - c) To give a clue about what this chapter teaches, get the idea that Satan is a real entity, not something made up by religious Jews and Christians. Also understand that Satan knows the bible well and he can quote scripture to us. My point is Satan is very "orthodox" in his belief in God and Jesus. Satan and his followers don't want God to rule over them. They want to discourage us from using our time to make a difference for Him and that's what we learn from reading this chapter. Speaking of this chapter let me discuss the events that happen here and hopefully tie it to this lesson.
2. Chapter 4 begins with the last of the preparation for Jesus for His ministry and some of the events that occur during His ministry. If one goes through the four gospel accounts, Luke skips over the first year of Jesus' public ministry and focuses on what He did as He traveled around the parts of Israel known as the Lake Galilee area. Know that none of the four gospels are designed to give a blow-by-blow description of every aspect of what Jesus did and taught. Each gospel has it's own unique set of stories and when the four gospels do overlap, they each have their own details for us to study. With that said, let me give you the key points of the chapter:
  - a) First we have the famous story of Jesus battling Satan in the wilderness.
    - i) This teaches us how to rely upon God's power against resistance to what we're called to do in our ministry.
  - b) Then we have Jesus in his hometown being rejected as the Messiah.
    - i) This teaches us where we can and cannot be successful in our ministry.
  - c) Then we have his first recorded miracle in Luke of casting out a demon.
    - i) This shows us the power God can give us over major powers of resistance
  - d) Then we have the second miracle of Jesus healing Peter's mother in law of a fever.
    - i) This shows us that God can help us even in what we consider the small things.
  - e) Finally, we have Jesus traveling through the Galilee area proclaiming the Gospel message.
3. As we go through this chapter know that no one can fully exposit ever aspect of these events. My goal is to show some aspects of how we can use our lives to make a difference for Him. With that said, let's begin the verse-by-verse study and see how we can make a difference for Him.

4. Chapter 4 Verse 1: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.
- a) To start, let's remember where we left off: John the Baptist was baptizing Jesus out in the desert. To remind us again of why: Not that Jesus needed cleansing of sin, but to identify Himself with our sins. Also remember that there is no chapter breaks in the original text. Therefore, after Jesus was baptized, the next thing he did was go (or stay) in the deserted area in the eastern end of Israel where He was tempted by the devil.
  - b) A couple of thoughts: First, realize that if Jesus is fully God, then He always had the Holy Spirit upon Him. This is not oh now that Jesus is baptized He got a special message from God the Father. Instead think of it as Jesus relying upon the Holy Spirit's power to make a difference for God the Father. Consider when we get inspired to do something good for God and we realize in hindsight how He was guiding us the whole time. That's how I do see this event happening.
    - i) I sort of see this as Jesus "going on the offense". It's sort of like, "OK, now that I'm trusting in God's power, it's time to take on the ruler of this world."
    - ii) How did Jesus know Satan would be there? No idea. I hold the view that Satan is in charge of our world. If I said I'll give you a billion dollars, you wouldn't believe me unless you believe I had a billion dollars to give you. Now consider that Satan can't really tempt Jesus unless it is his world to offer to Jesus to begin with.
    - iii) As I said in the introduction, Satan is "orthodox" in His view of the world. Who or whatever Satan is, he believes in a literal God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The key difference between Christians and demonic creatures is they don't want God to rule over their lives. They harass believers in order to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus. They want to delay as long as possible the number of people who become believers and therefore delay Jesus Second Coming as long as they can. Demons don't know when their rule over this world will end. They just know it ends with Jesus Second Coming, as at that time the total number of believers is now "fixed" and demons are then sent to hell as their purpose is done.
  - c) With that said, let me talk a little about fasting. After all Jesus didn't have to fast while He was dealing with Satan. I believe Jesus was so focused on dealing with Satan that He did not want to take the time to eat. The purpose of biblical fasting is not to lose weight. It is to take the time we would set aside for eating and use that time to focus upon God.
    - i) I have heard some amazing stories in my life of things people have accomplished for God while fasting and I struggle with it like most Christians. Years ago, I recall hearing a story by a famous pastor who sat next to a person on an airline who said "I'm fasting for the destruction of a certain church". My point both God and Satan take fasting as a sign that one is focusing upon them for a period of time.
    - ii) I've heard that after a few days one no longer thinks about food. Personally, I'd be the opposite. Everything would look like food after a few days. Still whatever did happen in that desert for 40 days was serious enough to where food was ignored.
    - iii) Remember that there were no witnesses to this event. I'm sure that Jesus later told the story of this 40-day period. I also heard a lecture that one can go about 40 days without food, and after that time period, one has to eat in order to survive. That's why the text says Jesus was hungry after 40 days. I also don't see believe the three temptations we are about to read about as all happening at the end of that 40-day period. I see them happening during that time period.
  - d) Finally, why 40 days? The number "40" is associated with testing. For example when the Israelites were in the desert, they sent spies to check out the land of Israel for 40 days and couldn't enter the land as they were afraid. (Numbers 13:25, 14:34.) My point is as the Israelites failed to trust God for those 40 days, in effect Jesus "past the test" they blew.

- e) I remember when my daughters were young they asked me, "Why doesn't God destroy the devil if he's so bad? The answer is God wants to show us that we can resist whatever temptations Satan throws at us by relying upon His power. The point is we on our own are no match for him. Relying upon God's power, we can't lose. Yes we still sin and we need to blame our own weaknesses much more than blaming demonic forces. Even with that said, one reason for this text about Jesus defeating Satan is to show us that by relying upon God's power we can defeat whatever demonic temptations do come our way.
- i) OK, enough of all of that, onto the specific temptations that Jesus did face:
5. Verse 3: The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."
- a) Did Satan believe Jesus had the power to turn stones into bread? Of course.
- b) Was Jesus literally starving to death and was it a temptation? Of course.
- c) Was anyone there to witness this event? No, so no one would see Jesus do this.
- d) So if Jesus was literally dying of hunger, why was this question such a bad thing?
- i) The issue isn't eating. The issue is trusting God to provide for us.
- ii) What the temptation was in effect, "Don't trust God the Father to guide our lives, go do something for yourself. Go enjoy your life and don't worry about whatever God will or will not do with our lives." Just make this stone bread and don't try to rely upon God the Father's power to satisfy Your own desire.
- iii) In effect the temptation was to break the bond between God the Father and God the Son by that question. The reason Jesus had to say no to that temptation is not so that He could eat, but to show that He and us should always do Father's will for our lives at any given moment. Grant it, most of the time, if we are hungry, God wants us to eat. However, there are times where God may say to us in effect, "Are you trusting Me more than food (or whatever) at this moment?" That's' the type of question Jesus Himself is facing with that temptation.
- e) Before I get into Jesus' response, let me address the issue of can Jesus be tempted? I'd say yes in the same sense Adam and Eve were tempted. No Jesus didn't have the "sin disease" in that all of us are born. That's the desire to want to break God's laws and do things our own way. However, Jesus was tempted in effect the same way Adam and Eve were, as to not trust God and want to do things their own way. The point is that Jesus refused to be disobedient to God the Father's will and didn't succumb to that temptation.
6. Verse 4: Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone.' "
- a) Jesus responds to Satan's request by quoting part of Deuteronomy 8:3. I was tempted to call this lesson, "How Jesus quotes the Old Testament" as He does that a lot in this lesson. In effect this lesson is a reminder that the way we handle our own temptations is to know our own bible in terms of knowing right from wrong. Does that mean we each have to be say, great bible scholars in order to resist temptation? Of course not. One thing that I've observed is the better one knows one's bible the more God says to us in effect, "OK, you think you've studied that passage? Let me now allow you to go through a test to see how you'd react based on being in a similar situation than as the bible describes it.
- b) Let me explain that concept another way: Jesus was aware of that Deuteronomy passage. It's one thing to quote it. It's another to live it. Jesus was "living it here" by realizing now that if He did turn stones into bread, He would not be doing God the Father's will at that exact moment in time. In effect this whole temptation is about breaking the bond between God the Father and God the Son at that moment in time.
- c) Consider Jesus winning the battle this way: Because Jesus won this confrontation, we can now rely upon "The Trinity" as a power source in our own confrontations with sin. God knows I have my own sin battles just as all of us do. However, relying upon His power I know I am eternally forgiven of my sins and I do have a power source that can help me in situations where I am being separated from God at that moment in time. With that said, I believe it's time to discuss "Temptation #2":

7. Verse 5: The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup> So if you worship me, it will all be yours."
- a) A lot of commentaries one can read on this passage focus on the "how". They ponder how did Satan lead Jesus up a mountain and how did Jesus see all the kingdoms of the world at one time? Was there a "wall of big screen monitors" showing worldwide kingdoms? Personally, I don't know or care about the "how", just the "why". I hold the view that if God is God, He can do what He wants when He wants. I also hold the view that while Satan can't be everywhere at once, he is a very powerful entity that is not to be messed with based on our own power. To put this question another way, I believe Satan at that moment in time somehow was given the power to show Jesus all the world's kingdoms. In other words, I don't doubt the "how", I just ponder why this story is here to study:
- i) The first "why" is to realize that Satan is a real and powerful being that we are not to try to mess with him based on our own power. Since I've beaten that point to death I can now move on.
- ii) The second "why" is to realize that this world belongs to Satan. Remember I gave the illustration of me giving you a billion dollars? It would only be a temptation if you believe I had a billion dollars to being with. My point is that this story would only be a real temptation if Satan did control the world.
- iii) My final "why" is what is Satan offering Jesus here? Satan's saying, you don't have to die for the sins of the world. Just worship me and I'll give it to you. What Satan is saying is, "You want to be in charge of all people? No problem, just worship me and You can have that. To understand this, one has to know a little about what is said about Satan in the Old Testament.
- a) Satan was created as the top angel. Apparently that privilege just wasn't good enough for him. Satan wanted control over everything. Maybe he didn't like the idea that God was eternally saving humans and that's why he rebelled. The point is he wanted to be acknowledged as being supreme so he wanted God Himself to somehow worship Him as being "top dog". (See Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 for more background on who Satan is and his motivation for doing this.) In summary, Satan was offering Jesus a short cut to the cross by this temptation.
8. Verse 8: Jesus answered, "It is written: `Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' "
- a) Before I talk about what is written here, I also need to discuss a phrase that may be part of this verse. If you read this verse in the King James Version, Jesus first says, "Get behind Me Satan". This is one of only a handful of places in the bible where people debate about whether or not a phrase should be included. The important point first: Whether or not this phrase is actually part of the text, doesn't affect the flow of the passage.
- i) If it is here, think about it logically: Did Satan still tempt Jesus after He made this statement? Based on the text yes. If that statement is part of the original text, what it refers to is the fact that God is in charge, and not Satan, so he must do what God commands him to do.
- ii) With that said, the rest of the verse is not debated. Let me talk about that and then I'll focus on how this affects us.
- b) Once again, Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy. This time it's Chapter 6, Verse 13.
- i) In effect, this is the same point as "Get behind me Satan". The Old Testament says that we are to serve God and Him only. Jesus is reminding Satan of that fact.
- ii) Remember again Satan is orthodox in his understanding of who Jesus is, as are the demons we'll read about later in the chapter. The difference is that demons refuse to let God be in charge of their lives. Demons and nonbelievers may believe in His existence, they just don't want to live by His rules for their lives.

- c) I was debating about when to talk about demons and Christians. I figure this is a good a place as any in the middle of this passage. First note that nowhere in the Old Testament is there any reference to anyone being demon possessed. None of the epistles bring up this topic. It is only prevalent in the Gospels and mentioned in the Book of Acts.
- i) My point is in effect too many Christians give Satan too much credit as opposed to just blaming their own sin nature. A purpose of Revelation stating there will be a 1,000-year future period of Satan being bound up (See Revelation 20:2) is to show us how people can be sinful without Satan's influence over the world.
  - ii) As one who has studied (through electronic media) under a handful of fairly well known bible teachers in my day, almost all of them have told of a few encounters with demonic possessed people. My point is they are not daily occurrences. In the Roman Catholic tradition, one rules out every other possibility before even testing to see if this is a possibility.
  - iii) A couple of thoughts: First of all, if one believes Jesus is both in charge of one's life and has paid the price for one's sins, one cannot be demon possessed, period. I've yet to hear of one encounter of a demon in a confessing Christian. I've also heard of some wonderful testimonies of lives changed dramatically by people once they have accepted Jesus and are no longer haunted by such demons. Also remember that demons fear Christians in that they know God working through them has the power to overcome what they desire to accomplish.
  - iv) In summary, demons are not something for us to fear in the sense of them taking over our bodies. Yes they do work to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus as they are doing what they can to delay Jesus return as long as possible. Making us ineffective witnesses is a separate topic from actual possession. If one encounters a person acting well "strangely", assume possession last, not first. More likely it is just some sort of mental disorder. The few people I know that have been involved in battling demon possession describe it as a difficult battle to fight to begin with.
  - v) The most prevalent location of demons is in cults and 3rd world countries. Later in the lesson I'll discuss why that is so. In the meantime, time for Verse 9:
9. Verse 9: The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> For it is written: " `He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; <sup>11</sup> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' "
- a) If you read this same story in Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 4), this story comes before the 2nd temptation. So did either Matthew or Luke get it out of order? The short answer is that the order is not as important as the fact that both included this story. Some suggest that Luke records this in order of importance and Matthew records it in order it occurred or vice versa. Either way, it's pretty trivial and not worth debating.
  - b) Coming back to the text itself, it's as if Satan is saying, "OK Jesus, you want to quote the bible, I can play that game too". Like I've stated a few times in this lesson so far, Satan is very "orthodox" in his understanding of scripture. He knows he loses in the end and he realizes Jesus is God. Satan also realizes that he is in charge of the world until the time of Jesus Second Coming so Satan's goal is to delay that event as long as possible.
  - c) With all that background, what Satan is saying here is in effect, "Show off your power. Since you are God, you won't die if you jump off that cliff as angels will protect you."
    - i) A little historical geography would be helpful here. The highest point where the temple stood was on the edge of a cliff overlooking a valley. If one has a fear of heights, it's not a good place to stand.
    - ii) So if Satan wanted Jesus to jump, why didn't Satan just push Jesus? I suspect part of the answer is Satan's own fear of who He actually is. The goal here is for Jesus to show off His power so people would see who He is.

- d) Let me step back for a moment and discuss the "how" for a moment. In the same way I don't know or care how Satan got Jesus to that point. I just figure if "God is God" and if Satan is the most powerful angel ever created, they have that sort of power to be where it is they want to be at any given moment in time. The same way the heavens opened up in the last chapter for the "dove like" creature to come down at Jesus' baptism, so I hold the view that if God is God and Satan is Satan they can move in ways that can't be explained by means of normal travel of time and space. In summary, I hold the view that if God can do anything He wants, He could arrange for Jesus to be at this location at this time.
  - e) With that said, let's come back to the temptation itself. Is Satan correct that angels would probably catch Jesus if He jumped? The answer is probably yes. The issue is whether or not we should put God to a test.
    - i) Let me explain it another way: Is it God's will for us to live through the day? Of course it is. However, if we decide to jump off a high cliff, odds are good we will not live through the day. To use a biblical example near the end of Mark's Gospel it says that Christians will be able to handle deadly snakes safely (See Mark 16:18). There are some churches that put that to the test by handing out snakes during the church service. My point is we are never to encourage God to put ourselves to any sort of deadly test to see if He is real. In the book of Acts (28:3-5), Paul did survive a bite from a deadly snake, but he didn't go out of way to try to be bitten.
    - ii) Bottom line is if we want to believe God is real, simply study one's bible and one is going to come to that logical conclusion. God never wants us to risk our lives just to prove He is real. If you doubt me, see the next verse:
10. Verse 12: Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "
- a) Once again Jesus quotes the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:6).
  - b) If there is one thing I get out of studying this whole section, is the best way to fight off the temptation to sin, is to get our focus back on God's word. When temptation comes, if we can get our focus on Him or even on other people I find that's the best way to overcome whatever is the temptation of the moment.
  - c) To sum up the three temptations, they are in effect, "If you believe God really loves you then you will do "this"". Our life is about doing His will, not ours. The second one was about the concept that we can live a wonderful life here if we just turn from God. Let's be honest, life would be a whole lot easier if we didn't have to be accountable to Him. Those who don't believe in God will brag about how "freeing" it is to not be accountable to God. In reality, trusting that God forgives us no matter what is far more freeing than to worry about whether we are pleasing to Him by our actions. The final temptation is to not show to test if He is real. Again, if we jump off a cliff, most likely we'll just die. We can test to see if He's real by studying His word. We can see if He's real by making a difference for Him in our lives and watching Him work. The temptation is to demand that He work in a certain way. It simply comes down to, is God in charge or are we in charge of our lives at any given moment.
  - d) With that said, that's the end of the "temptation" section of this chapter. Time to read on.
11. Verse 13: When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.
- a) It's not like Satan said, "OK Jesus, you win, kill me now and get it over with". It's just that Jesus didn't succumb to any of the temptations to separate Himself from God the Father's will for His life. One thing we can learn from this section is that if we trust in God's will for our lives, eventually Satan stops trying for the moment.
  - b) One thing to catch as one studies the gospels is that demons aren't afraid to be in the same location as believers. Remember their goal: They can't take away our salvation, but they can and do work to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus. Their goal is to delay as long as possible Jesus ruling the world. That happens by delaying new people from becoming Christians in the first place. That's why they work to make us ineffective witnesses.

12. Verse 14: Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.
- a) Here is one of the places where one has to study all four gospels to see the time outline of the history of Jesus ministry. My point is Jesus didn't end his encounter with Satan and immediately start what is described in Verse 14. We learn from John's Gospel that Jesus spent the next year or so in the southern part of Israel.
  - b) OK, time for a quick historical geography lesson: Israel geographically was in three parts in those days: "There was the southern part called "Judea" that included Jerusalem. There was the Northern area called the "Galilee" as it was centered on the economy around Lake Galilee. Finally there was the Samaritan area in between those two. In fact religious Jews would walk around the Samaritan area to travel to and from the Galilee to Judea.
    - i) My point is simply that from Verse 14 all the way through most of Chapter 9 if my memory is correct covers a period of time over a year when Jesus went from town to town through the Galilee area. By one historical account there were about 250 towns and villages in this area.
  - c) I also need to explain the word "synagogue": That word just means, "meeting place". The same way most towns in the United States have lots of churches, lots of synagogues were around in Israel back then. It's like the old joke, "If you don't like how a preacher teaches, try the church down the street." Each synagogue has someone who decided who would speak on any given Sabbath as well as other duties there. Guest speakers were common. My point is simply that since Jesus was going around from town to town doing miracles, and the word about Him was spreading, He was welcome in the different synagogues as people wanted to check Him out to see whether or not this popular rabbi (teacher) would be the Messiah.
13. Verse 16: He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup>The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
- a) Remember that nothing is recorded about Jesus' life from age 12 to about age 30. I suspect Jesus spent his life as one of the townfolk in a place called Nazareth. Synagogue was not just a gathering place on "Saturdays". They would usually be schools during the week to teach children the bible and they had weekday adult classes too. Again, those in charge of each synagogue would decide who would read or teach on any given occasion.
  - b) With that said, here is Jesus, known in his hometown. Verse 17 says that the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. In other words, Jesus didn't ask for this scroll. It was common in a synagogue service to have a regular reading from the first five books of the Old Testament and another regular reading from somewhere else in the Old Testament. My point is I suspect Jesus didn't ask for this book, it was just handed to Him. Also recall that there were no chapter marks or verse numbers in those days. Jesus just turned to a specific passage that He wanted to read from Isaiah. I give all this background so that we can understand how it is that Jesus was chosen to speak and that He chose to read from Isaiah on that given day. With that said, let's look at what He read:
14. Verse 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
- a) First let me admit, this is one of my favorite passages in this chapter, let alone the book, so be prepared for another little lecture just on this passage. I love it because it's a very good summary of what Jesus was called to do: 1) Preach the good news to the poor (of spirit), 2) freedom for the prisoners (of sin), recovery of sight for the blind (so we see our need for God) to release the oppressed (not try to please God by our works, but just by trusting in His complete sin payment). That's a good summary of that passage and I think I summed it up pretty well in one short paragraph.

- b) To state all of this another way, Jesus is saying that the reason He came is to show us that we can be saved not by "trying harder", but just to accept His completed work. In other words the reason we do good works is not to earn points with God, but simply because that is the best way for us to live out our lives. Fearing God is not about losing salvation, but about fearing losing whatever opportunities God gives us to be a witness for Him.
  - c) With all that said, what I love about this passage is the fact that Jesus literally stopped on a comma. If one reads the passage in Isaiah 61, Verse 1 and the first half of Verse 2, that is where Jesus stops. What Isaiah said after that comma is: "and the day of vengeance of our God". Did the Israelites want the Messiah to execute vengeance? Of course. They didn't want to be under Roman rule. The reason Jesus stopped there is not because He won't do vengeance, it is just part of Jesus 2nd Coming, not His first.
    - i) To put it another way, Jesus came 2,000 years ago to pay the price for our sins not to execute judgment. That "comma" in Isaiah has lasted two thousand years and still counting. So is Jesus the Messiah because He didn't execute judgment? Yes and let me explain:
    - ii) If I had to give the #1 reason why people refuse to accept Jesus for the payment of their sins, it comes down to pride. People want to prove their worth to God and want to show how their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. I've heard words to that effect from both religious and nonreligious people. Even Muslims will say that their admittance into heaven is about good deeds outweighing bad deeds. The idea of Jesus paying the complete price for one's sins and there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation over and above that is what separates Christians from Mormon's and Jehovah Witnesses let alone Muslims and other religions.
    - iii) OK, and what does that have to do with the "comma"? The answer is if Jesus had wiped out all of Israel's enemies, it still would not solve the "sin problem". That's why Jesus has to wait for His Second Coming to execute the "vengeance part".
  - d) With all that said, I think I explained what the verses meant when I started this discussion and spent the rest of the time explaining the "comma". Let's move on.
15. Verse 20: Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
- a) These verses are a great visual picture. Imagine going to church, a guest speaker walks up to the podium, reads what is handed to him, tells us that he is the fulfillment of what is said in that ancient scroll and sits down. After he sits down and everyone is still looking at him, Jesus then says, "What I just read is happening now right in front of you".
  - b) I'm sure the audience had to be in shock by Jesus making that claim. By this point in His ministry, Jesus has been making the rounds all over Israel for well over a year. I'm sure the word about Him as spread. At the same time, this is Jesus' hometown. The crowd in that synagogue knows that Jesus has going there all of his life. Now here is this local boy saying in effect, "I am the Messiah, deal with it". The shock value alone makes this scene worth thinking about if nothing else.
16. Verse 22: All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"
- a) The crowd watched Jesus grow up. They probably knew Him as the oldest son of Joseph who came to synagogue every Saturday (or whatever Saturday was called back then) and to the best of the crowd's memory, never did anything wrong. Now as this crowd was amazed at what He said, Jesus next words were in effect, "I know you want me to do a miracle like I've done in other towns." For Jesus to say, "Physician heal yourself" is their desire for Jesus to do something great right in front of them.

- b) A couple of things I take away from this: The first is the reminder that life is all about us asking God for His will to be done in our lives, not us demanding God work our way and on our timing. The way to prove God is real is not to demand miracles there on the spot, but to trust in God's word and trust that He will work His way and on His timing.
    - i) When I pray, do I lay out my own requests before God? All the time. I also do it with the understanding that He is God and I am not. Therefore my requests are just that requests and not demands. I understand His right to say no at anytime.
    - ii) As to what happened in Jesus hometown, they were demanding that Jesus work a miracle there on the spot. It's one thing to want God to help out our situation, it's another to demand that He work our way and our timing. That's the problem here.
  - c) In the meantime, Jesus is not done making His point about us demanding God work our way and our timing:
17. Verse 24: "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown"
- a) The quote that Jesus gives here continues through Verse 27. Before I move on to give the illustration that Jesus gives in the next three verses, Verse 24 is personal to me. No one in my family where I grew up accepts me as one who is called to preach the Gospel. Let me put it this way: some of my extended family go to church. That's different from choosing to commit one's life to serving God. I've come to realize is that if Jesus could not convince His half-siblings that He was the Messiah what makes me think I can convince my greater family to make that commitment? My point is we have to accept the idea that we're called to do what God calls us to do, and nothing more. Do I pray for my siblings? Just about every day. Do I preach to them the Gospel message? No. I figured out that if they're not interested in what I write or say about God, it's His business and not mine.
  - b) The point I'm making here is we have to accept the idea that God calls us to do and not try to do what He has not called us to do. I've had to learn that lesson the hard way. Usually we find out by trial and error what God has and has not called us to do. That's what I had to learn with my extended family and I'm sure many people have had to learn that same lesson the hard way just as I have had to do it.
  - c) In the meantime, Jesus needs to make a similar point to those in His "home synagogue":
18. Verse 25: I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.<sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.<sup>27</sup> And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian."
- a) As an illustration, Jesus uses two examples from the books of 1st and 2nd Kings (actually one book originally as those who have been with me through Kings know) where God helped specific Gentiles draw closer to God while ignoring Israelites. As to the specifics Jesus is reminding the Israelites of a time where there was a famine for over three years in Israel, yet the prominent prophet at that time Elijah was only sent to help a widow who happened to be a Gentile. A generation later, another prominent prophet with a similar name (Elisha) helped out a foreign army officer who had leprosy while there were many Israelites at that time who also suffered from the same horrible disease.
  - b) Without getting into all the specific's that took place back in "Kings" the main point that Jesus is making is that God works where He chooses to work on His timing and His way. There were many in Israel who suffered while God choose to work through specific non-Israelites at that time. Let's be honest, to speak to a large group of Jewish people and tell them how God helped specific non-Jewish people while many Jews were suffering at the same time is not a smart thing to say. Jesus didn't "play to the audience here".
  - c) That leads me back to my point that we can't demand God work our way on our timing. He is in charge and we have to accept that fact and constantly remind ourselves of that fact as we pray. That's the point that Jesus is making in his home synagogue here.

- d) Before I move on, let me touch on the issue of why God allows suffering? I have seen many devout believers suffer terribly at times. I can't explain why God allows some to suffer and on occasion miraculously cure others. I just know that both occur. Part of the answer is about our acceptance of His will working on His timing. Whenever I first hear about someone suffering, my prayer now is, "Help them to learn what God wants them to learn from that situation, let not these lessons be wasted". As I write this, I'm dealing with a tragedy on my wife's side of the family. I can't explain why all of it occurred. All I can do is pray that prayer of acceptance and ask God for Him to work through that situation for His glory. Do I believe in medical help? Of course. The issue isn't medicine, it's about learning to accept God's will in all situations and making the best decisions possible.
- e) In the meantime, it's time to see the reaction in the synagogue to Jesus' statement here:
19. Verse 28: All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.
- a) Imagine how tough it is for any preacher to tell a crowd, "God is going to help who He's going to help His way and on His timing. He may not do a miracle for you besides your salvation, but He may do one for a non-believer". That type of preaching is not good for encouraging people to give them money. It may be reality, but it won't sell well.
- b) In fact the crowd was so angry, they were ready to kill Jesus on the spot. I don't know how Jesus walked through the crowd ready to kill Him, but He did. I suspect that Jesus just escaped like a hero in a movie getting out of a tough situation. The way I picture it is this mob is moving toward a local cliff. Jesus ducked low and walked through them and when they got to the cliff, they realized Jesus was gone. I'm sure at that point Jesus had to leave His hometown fast as they were not willing to accept Him as the Messiah.
20. Verse 31: Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. <sup>32</sup> They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.
- a) The point here is that Jesus went to another near by town and fairly soon after that, Jesus was preaching at another synagogue on another Sabbath day (what we call Saturday). As I read this, I keep thinking about how my own siblings react to my ministry. Bottom line is if we are rejected one time, that doesn't mean God wants us to quit. We just move on to where we are accepted. I know of many missionaries who've experienced lots of rejection before getting others to accept the Gospel message. Like most of the things we do in life, we need to experience rejection in order to be successful.
- b) The point here is that while Jesus was rejected in His hometown, we do read of Him being accepted elsewhere. My point is Jesus didn't give up just because those in His hometown rejected Him. Jesus just moved on to the next town to preach the same message.
- c) With that said, let me talk a little about Jesus message "having authority". I'm sure most of the Jewish people still wanted Jesus to overthrow the Romans. The point is people are willing to accept Jesus as a great teacher who knows His bible, but that's different from the concept of fully giving one's life over to Him to live as He desires. What was common in preaching as it is today, is people quoting other famous teachers. I'm betting that when others spoke in the synagogue, it was common to hear, "Well this rabbi says this and that rabbi says that, but I say..." Just as in my writing I'll occasionally quote people who have influenced me, it is common to name such people. However, when Jesus spoke, He didn't quote other people, He spoke as if He knew it Himself, that's "The authority".
21. Verse 33: In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, <sup>34</sup> "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God!"
- a) If it wasn't bad enough I already spent about half the lesson dealing with Satan Himself and discussing demons, here we get another reference to such demons here near the end of the chapter. The good news is I won't go into as much detail again on this topic.

- b) Here's the key point to remember: Demons aren't afraid to be in a church or synagogue. What they fear is being around those actually preaching the gospel. Personally, if I see someone talking gibberish, I don't assume they are demon possessed. Most of the stories one hears about demons usually occurs in third world countries. That's because demons focus on those involved in occults and religions that effectively teach people to "try to be a better person so God will accept your good deeds over your bad deeds".
  - c) Consider that Jesus was preaching in a synagogue. Someone in the audience was demon possessed. Notice that person wasn't talking gibberish. That person was speaking in his right mind and that demon was angry because it was hearing the gospel message.
  - d) I hold the view that Christians don't need to fear demons. If anything they are afraid of us if we are preaching or living the Gospel message. Yes they do work to discourage us to be good witnesses for God, but when we are a good witness that's when they fear us, just as they feared Jesus at this point in time.
  - e) Finally, to restate my running joke of this lesson, demons are "orthodox" in their views. To state their thoughts another way, demons are "pre-millennial" meaning they believe in a literal hell where know they'll be sent to when Jesus returns for His Second Coming.
    - i) I state all of that as the text says the demon was scared Jesus was going to destroy them. In other words, demons understand God's plan for the world and they get the idea that eventually they lose and go to hell. They just don't know the when as the only God the Father knows the time frame of Jesus' return. (See Matthew 24:36 on the point and see Revelation 19:20 about Satan's inevitable destruction.)
  - f) What I struggled with is the concept that if demons know they lose in the long run, why do they bother in the first place? My conclusion is their hatred of the idea of God ruling over their lives drives them to rebel even if it means eternity in hell. That's why there are so many people who get the reality of God, but their desire to live life their way drives them to ignore God even though deep down they understand about eternity.
  - g) OK, enough demon theology for one lesson, time for Jesus to get rid of him (or it):
22. Verse 35: "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.
- a) What I wondered is, "Is the demon-healed man saved? No idea. For all we know the man who is now cured may himself reject Jesus as the Messiah. My point is Jesus did miracles like this to demonstrate who He was, and we don't know if the formerly demon possessed man is now saved. The other obvious thing it shows is that Jesus has the power to end the possession of a person.
  - b) Notice Jesus didn't do any big magic spells or rituals. Jesus just said, "Come out of him" and that was that. It makes me wonder about all the rituals associated with trying to cure someone of demon possession. As one who has read some amazing stories about such occurrences over the years, I'm convinced the most powerful thing we can do is convince such people to accept the Gospel message as that is more important than any ritual. The stories I've heard over the years from pastors I respect state that such battles are usually very intense as such demons (who can't embody believers) don't want to leave. I'm also convinced that such stories are rare in churches as we pray too much. It most often occurs in places where the occult exist as if to drive people away from the Gospel truth.
  - c) OK, enough discussion of demons for one lesson. I still have nine more verses to go and I want to make it through the end of this chapter in this lesson.
23. Verse 36: All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!"<sup>37</sup> And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.
- a) Very simple here: What Jesus did amazed the crowd who watched this. Jesus is showing proof that He is God by doing what has never been done before: Just saying a word (not reciting any specific ritual) and demon's come out of a person.

- b) Jesus just told the demon to get out and that was that. In Judaism at that time, there were rituals to deal with demons. In the book of Acts 19:13-16, there were Jewish exorcists who tried to invoke Jesus name to cast out demons. Since they weren't saved, to put it simply, they failed miserably. Coming back to Luke here, think of Jesus casting out this demon mainly to convince those who were with Him as proof that He is who He claimed to be. That's why the news of the demon being cast out by Jesus spread through that area.
  - c) OK John, I believe Jesus is God and can cast out demons. Why should I care? The short version is to show us that we don't have to fear demons. If we are saved, then Jesus lives within us. My point is by trusting in Him we don't have to fear any evil that exists in this world. To state a classic verse, "He who is in us, is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world. (See 1st John 4:4.) That's enough about demons for one lesson, let's read on.
24. Verse 38: Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. <sup>39</sup> So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.
- a) I remember the first time I studied this passage, I thought, what, Peter is married? Not only was he married, but church tradition is that he had children at that time. One of the early church father's even mentioned Peter's wife as one who was helpful in the church.
  - b) We haven't gotten to the point in the story where Simon is renamed Peter, but yes it is the same person. Think of Simon as the name he was born with. The word Peter means little stone and that's what Jesus called him later in Luke's account.
  - c) Now the more important question: Why is this story here. Most of the chapter deals with the story of Jesus battling Satan and then Jesus casting out a demon, so why tell this story here about Jesus healing Peter's mother in law? It's to show that God can help us not only help us in the "major" problems of life but the little one's as well.
  - d) A high fever as a doctor like Luke would know is a human body's reaction to fighting off some sort of disease. Remember there was no aspirin in those days. People died from a disease and a high fever. By the way the other gospel accounts of this event only use the word "fever". Luke as a doctor says "high fever" and I suspect he interviewed someone who was at this event to tell the story.
  - e) The amazing part of the story was that Peter's mother immediately got up and waited on Jesus and the family. When one recovers from a fever, usually one is weak until we get our strength back. This woman was cured so well, she immediately served a meal.
  - f) One also has to understand that the big meal of the week in that culture was the first meal after "synagogue service". It's kind of like "Sunday dinner" in our culture. As I grew up, my father used to say we could do what we want, but we have to be home for that dinner. My point is this woman was healed so well she could serve the big meal of the week right after the fever. Did she eventually die? Of course. The point of miracle healing is not so that we can live on earth forever, it's just that Jesus did signs like this and occasionally we do see God work miracles today simply to show that He is in charge of all things. I don't believe we should be dependant upon such miracles. Our job is to trust in His word and if God chooses to work over and above that as signs of His existence, that's His business.
  - g) In the meantime, we're about to read of more healing and yes more demon removals:
25. Verse 40: When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. <sup>41</sup> Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ
- a) I know I'm running long so I'll make this quick: Word of Jesus was spreading quick so anyone with a hangnail or a missing limb were now begging to be healed. Apparently Jesus helped those one at a time who needed curing of something. I've never trusted any Christian who claims to be a "faith healer". Why don't they go to a hospital and empty it out if they have such a gift? I believe such people do far more damage then they do good.

- b) Since I brought up healing, let me discuss it quickly. I have seen and heard from people I respect on this issue of God on rare occasions doing great healing miracles. I usually see it done most often with new believers to get them to learn to trust God more. To quote a pastor who died fairly quickly from cancer, "God allowed me to have cancer to begin with and I'll trust Him through it and it's His business if He wants to end it." (That true story is from a sermon preached by John MacArthur on this issue.)
  - c) My whole point here is simply that miracles do occur, but our trust in Jesus should be to guide us through whatever we deal with and not for some sort of miracle cure. I know of devout Christians who are paraplegics and other things that are painful to live with. They don't waste their time with "healing ministries" or usually have had to learn the hard way that those people are more interested in our money than the actual healing.
  - d) Finally, let me talk about why Jesus told the demons to keep quiet. They acknowledged Jesus as God, but Jesus didn't want their testimony. Paul did something similar when he encountered a demon in Acts 16-18. The point is God doesn't want demons as testimony of who He is because Satan is associated with lying (See John 8:44).
  - e) In summary, this little story is here to show us Jesus power over diseases and what He's capable of doing in our world. Again I don't see this as God giving us the ability to say, end every sickness or bad thing we encounter by saying so. It's just a reminder of who is in charge and what He is capable of doing in our world.
  - f) With that said, we're down to the final three verses:
26. Verse 42: At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. <sup>43</sup> But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." <sup>44</sup> And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.
- a) The point here is that Jesus got to a point where He was in such demand for healing, that as someone who was fully human as well as fully God, it quickly got hard for Jesus to get any rest. I picture throngs of people constantly going demanding to be healed of what ever was on their mind for the moment. The chapter ends with the idea that Jesus needed to go to other towns and not just stay in one place to "cure every hangnail". With that said Jesus went from town to town preaching in other synagogues about who He is and what is His purpose for coming in the world.
27. Let me put all of this together and do it quickly as I'm running long. The text in this lesson shows how Jesus prepared for His ministry and what He did to start His ministry. What I wanted us to get out of the text is not just to learn about how Jesus started, but how we can make a difference for God in our own lives. One of my favorite expressions on living out the Christian life is, if you don't believe Satan is real try opposing him for awhile and watch what happens". My point is if we want to make a difference for God we too in our way will encounter spiritual resistance. The good news is God's power in us to preach the gospel message is far greater than any and all ways demonic powers can try to stop us. In summary, trust in God's power and use the most valuable thing we own, our time to make a difference for God and we don't have to worry about whatever resistance does exist in this world. The rest as they say is the details and I hope that what you've learned about Jesus early ministry helps each of us to make that difference for Him.
28. Let's pray: Father, first of all, help us to be grateful for the great things You have given us in our lives. Thank You that we are saved not based on being a good person but only based on what You did for us 2,000 years ago from our time perspective. Guide the time You have given us so that we may use it for Your glory. Help us to use the gifts You have provided for us so that we can use it for the greatest purpose one can have in life, to make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Aamen.