

Rejected

As we begin our study today, we need to continually remind ourselves that none of the events that took place in Jesus' life were unexpected. God is "omniscient". He knows and sees all things that will ever take place, all in the same moment of time, past, present and future. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things, the "first cause" of all that takes place, the author and the perfecter of every matter within this existence, especially our faith.

And no, I can't begin to understand those incomprehensible attributes of God. But, by faith, I do believe that all those things are true. Why is that so? It's because I know that these scriptures are the very "Breath of God", holy truths breathed onto the pages of this bible by Him. And I believe Him!

And while, as the "Son of Man", the Lord Jesus might not have brought all of His omniscience with Him when He was born into human flesh, He was so "filled with the Holy Spirit", that His knowledge and His understanding of the people and the events He encountered were still far and beyond anything we can imagine or comprehend.

And so, here in these words that we are about to read today, we find that while some people really were looking forward to Jesus coming to them as the Messiah, and they gratefully received His message of salvation, many others did not believe Him, and they would begin to reject Him. So much so that Jesus would later say . . .

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Aren't those last words so very sad . . . "there are few who find that narrow gate"!

Listen and follow along as I read about some of the beginning events of the ministry that Jesus engaged in. And take note of how those doubts and uncertainties were taking place in the hearts of those who heard Jesus that day. These words beginning in verse 14 of Luke chapter 4.

¹⁴ Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

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. ¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

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,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

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, ²¹ and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

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.

²³ 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.'"

²⁴ "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. (Luke 4:14-24)

As we read these words, it seems clear that many of the people in the synagogue that day were at first receptive to Jesus and to His teaching. But then some began to ask, "isn't this Joseph's son". And Jesus was able to perceive doubts and uncertainty within their minds, prompting Him to say, "I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his hometown".

Folks, the words that Jesus spoke to the people that day were very difficult words for many of the Jews of that day. Because within His words, Jesus was clearly and plainly making a bold statement about Himself, declaring to these people that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the One whom Isaiah had prophesied about in those words He had just read. And Jesus clearly knew that

it would be very difficult for some of them to accept His claims, and that they would begin almost immediately to reject Him.

Imagine for a moment that you and I were sitting there in that synagogue that day, and this man, this ordinary man, suddenly declares Himself to be this One that Isaiah had written about, the Messiah, the Son of God. Those words,

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,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

Yes, those people then, and even you and I, if we would have been there, would have wanted His declaration to be true, that He truly was the Messiah who had come to save our souls. But I confess that I might have also had some of those same doubts and some of those same uncertainties about Jesus.

It's not an easy thing to reconcile within our minds that yes, Jesus was an ordinary person like you and me, but He was also God.

I must confess that even now such things are still much a mystery to me. Though by faith I believe these truths given to us in these scriptures, I still have difficulty separating out Jesus' condition of being "fully God", while at the same time being "fully human". I can't quite fathom that just like you and me, Jesus would as verse 14 tells us, really did need the "power of God's Spirit" to enable and to strengthen Him to step out and to do the things that He did.

But again, by faith, I do accept the simple truth that yes, Jesus truly was, and is, the "Son of God", fully God, no less God than God the Father. But at the same time, He was also "Son of man", fully man, no less man than you and me.

You and I will probably never fully understand that special paradox within Jesus' soul. It was truly unique to Him and no one else. But we can believe that He really did experience the events of this life much in the same way as each of us does, because we see it in these scriptures.

We are reminded of that especially in the words that tell us that “He was tempted in all ways, just as we are, yet without sin”.

Let me also hesitate here and remind us that yes, the temptations that we have been studying about really did take place in Jesus’ life, temptations that were very personal and intimate to His soul. Too often, the liberal preachers of our day will insist that events like these were not really real, that they were just intended as object lessons for us to follow. But that is not true. These temptations really did take place in Jesus’ life, temptations that were very personal and very intimate to His soul.

But with that being said, we know that these temptations, and Jesus’ responses, were also given here as a special witness, a testimony, to say to you and me that most assuredly, temptations much like those He suffered will also come to each of us, in different forms yes, but they will still surely come to us.

And yes, they will be very, very real, with a real live demon tempting us, just as satan tempted Jesus. And no, we will probably not recognize them as demons. They may be in the form of a person, sometimes even in the form of a friend. But even so, they are still very, very real.

And we will need to deal with those temptations very much in the same way that Jesus did. As much as is possible for us, we do need to prepare ourselves ahead of time, thinking through some of the obvious weaknesses and vulnerabilities that we know exist within our souls. And again, as much as we possibly can, we need to “settle” those matters in our mind and soul, ahead of time, with preplanned answers and responses. That was so with Jesus, and it must be so with you and me. Folks, known weaknesses to temptations, when left unattended, can eat away slowly at our resolve and can eventually lead to our defeat.

Simply put, it is good for you and me to just face our temptations “head-on”, deal with them in a full and complete way, and then we can move on to the life and the purposes that God has called us to be about.

And I would also like to suggest that once we have properly dealt with a temptation, that we place reminders in our path to give us warnings against venturing back into those same temptations.

That was the example that God gave to us in the life of Joshua and the Children of Israel. As God parted the waters for them to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land, God had them pick up stones and carry them over to the other

side and to place them in a memorial, as a reminder, so that in future days, when they might be discouraged and even have their backs “pushed to the wall”, they would see those stones and be reminded that they had come out of that wilderness, and that they must never go back into it again.

The thing they did there that day must serve as a testimony to you and me, that as we move further on into our salvation and into the plans God has for us, we must never compromise for a moment. We must never allow ourselves to venture back into the wilderness that we lived in while we were unsaved.

Yes, in some ways that lifestyle was comfortable to us. We knew it and we knew what to expect from it. But it was wrong! It was not righteous, and it did not have the sweet promises that our salvation has to offer.

We must never allow ourselves to go back to that old way of life. It will destroy us, and it will destroy our families and everything that we hold dear.

And the shortest distance to get on into the life that God wants for us is to go straight through the temptations, face our battles head-on and then move on. And once we have “put our hand to the plow”, we must never look back.

Folks, I have no doubt that the rejection that Jesus perceived was taking place within the hearts of the people in the synagogue that day was simply another of the many other temptations that Jesus would endure during His ministry to tempt Him to “give up” on the obstinate people He had come to seek and to save. But praise be to God, He did not give in to those temptations.

One other reminder and even a warning . . . and it's pointed out for us here in this response that Jesus received as He stepped forward into ministry . . . you and I must understand that this world around us, and even some of our closest friends and relatives will not be “on our side” as we go forward. They often will not be helpful to us. They may, instead, in some ways, be against us.

Jesus understood that reality for Himself, and you and I must understand it for ourselves. Jesus had no preconceived notions of people flocking to Him to receive the “good news” that He would bring to them. Yes, many would come to Him, but for the most part, and especially with the Jews, He was despised and rejected. These scriptures clearly tell us that “He came to His own, but His own received Him not”.

And again folks, though it is hard for us to comprehend, Jesus actually wrote those very words about Himself over 700 years earlier through the mind and the

hand of the prophet Isaiah. Listen to these words given to us in Isaiah chapter 53.

¹ Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:1-4)

These words clearly describe the blessed Lord Jesus as He came to us and freely offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. But unfortunately, most people have despised and rejected Him.

I'm reminded also that as Isaiah surrendered his own heart to God, God offered a very special opportunity to Him. God immediately extended a call to Isaiah to join in a special mission and a calling. And like as with the Lord Jesus, his words would also be rejected.

Listen for a moment to what God said to Isaiah about his mission and his calling!

⁹And He (God) said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ "Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Isaiah would preach the gospel to the people, but they would not listen to him.

He was willing to go forward and preach the gospel, but the people would reject him, and they would reject his ministry.

And in many ways, this prophecy about Isaiah was a "word picture" of the ministry prophesied for the Lord Jesus, because Jesus also came and gave everything He could give, so that men and women might be saved. But yet, He was despised and rejected, first by His own people, but now, in our day, also most all the people of the earth. And in rejecting Him, they have rejected His great gift of salvation.

And here in our scripture passage, Jesus knew well that this rejection was soon to take place in His own ministry. And knowing the thoughts of those who were gathered around Him there in the synagogue that day, He said,

²³ . . . 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.'"

²⁴ "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. (Luke 4:23-24)

The reading of this simple passage is not always clearly understood by some of its readers. But what Jesus is saying to these folks then, and consequently to you and me now is that, yes, many will at first be enamored and astonished at His words. But when it is fully realized what the message and the requirements of the gospel are declaring, people will begin to fall away and reject both Him and His message.

It will be just as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold, most everyone would eventually turn away from the Lord Jesus and return to their old ways of sin.

That rejection was beginning to take place here in these words of this text, and it would quickly spread. And sadly, that same rejection of the Lord Jesus is still taking place all around you and me today. Many people today will hear the sweet words of the gospel and go forward in an altar call and seemingly accept its promises. But as is mentioned in the Parable of the Soils, when the pressures of this life are confronted by the truths of the gospel, many, many do quickly turn back, and they choose to do as some of the tribes of Israel chose to do in Joshua's day. They will return to the sufferings of that awful wilderness they just came out of.

They don't seem to realize that they are rejecting the far-better enjoyments of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control that God's Holy Spirit offers in favor of the miseries of their old sins, that of lying, stealing, unfaithfulness, carousing, arguing and bitter spirits.

And folks, there is a very special warning being given in these words of the prophecy of Isaiah, a warning that tells us that when men and women exhibit a resistance to the salvation that Jesus offers, He then often allows their hearts and minds to become dull of hearing, causing them to then move on deeper into their sinfulness. And as they reject Him, He will "give them over" even further to the desires and lusts of their flesh.

But why would that be so? It's because God does not want a half-hearted commitment from us. He wants our whole heart. And He desires to separate out a people for Himself, a people who are fully and utterly surrendered to Him.

My question for each of us as we close for today is, "In which group are we choosing to be a part of?" It is a choice that we will most assuredly make, one way or another. We might not openly despise and reject Christ, or even believe that we are doing it. We might instead simply choose other things over Him. But whether we openly reject Him or just quietly turn away from Him, we have done the same thing, and we will surely wilt away and die in our sins.

May we instead, give our whole heart to the Lord Jesus and may we do as these words of Hebrews 12 tell us, and

2. . . fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

May we pray.