

## **Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth** (Luke 4:14-30)

One of the greatest disappointments in Jesus' earthly ministry must have been His rejection by the people of His own home town. Although Jesus had become popular throughout Galilee, the people of Nazareth weren't ready to accept Him or His message. In fact, the people were so shocked by His teaching that they led Jesus to a nearby cliff in an attempt to kill Him! People today still reject Jesus for any number of reasons. But Jesus and His message—His truth—still deserve our trust. He's fully worthy of our faith.

### **Jesus unmistakably presents Himself as the Messianic Savior (4:14-21).**

To view Jesus as a mere man, a "home town kid," fails to comprehend His true nature. Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior, God in the flesh. When we see Him in this light, His claim on our lives makes perfect sense.

*Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and receiving praise from everyone (4:14-15).*

Galilee became the focal point of Jesus' extended, itinerant ministry. Luke states that Jesus went to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit, who descended on Jesus at His baptism (Luke 3:22) and accompanied Him during His temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1) now was evident in Jesus' expanding ministry. Jesus' reputation spread quickly throughout the region. He went from village to village and taught in the local synagogues. The synagogue was Jesus' early platform for expanding His powerful teaching ministry. As He taught and performed miracles people "glorified" Him, though probably in the sense of praising Him for His abilities rather than worshiping Him as God at this stage. Jesus became a popular preacher throughout Galilee.

*Jesus went to the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth where He stood up to read the Scriptures (4:16-17).*

One of the villages of Galilee, Nazareth, would of course be included in Jesus' traveling ministry. Jesus grew up in Nazareth. He was well known in this community. Reports of Jesus' ministry had reached Nazareth, and the people seemed eager to hear their local son. As was His custom, Jesus attended the synagogue service on the Sabbath. He stood up to read the Scriptures, probably by invitation of the local synagogue leaders. An attendant handed Jesus a scroll containing the prophecies of Isaiah. Jesus opened the scroll to a specific passage that would become the basis of his teaching that day. (Note that Jesus knew the Scriptures well!)

***Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah that the Messiah would proclaim good news in the power of the Spirit (4:18-19).***

Jesus selected Isaiah 61:1-2 for His reading that day. This passage contains a prophecy about the anticipated work of God's Messiah. The Messiah would be characterized by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was responsible for anointing the Messiah for His task. That anointing prepared the Messiah to proclaim good news, the gospel. Jesus' message was indeed good news, the good news that God had initiated a new work on earth. The target of this good news was to be "the poor." Jesus cared deeply for the poor (Luke 6:20), including the spiritually poor, the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). The Messiah would also proclaim freedom for those in captivity and sight for the blind, again including both physical and spiritual realities. He would also release the oppressed. These works, predicted by Isaiah and performed by Jesus, were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God to earth. The Messiah, thereby, would "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." The work of the promised Messiah would be unmistakable. It's significant to note that Jesus stopped reading just before Isaiah's prophecy regarding the Messiah's role as judge—Jesus would proclaim good news at His first advent, but will proclaim judgment when He returns.

***Jesus declared that Isaiah's Messianic prophecy had been fulfilled in their midst that day (4:20-21).***

Having completed the Scripture reading, Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue attendant, and sat down (the posture for preaching in the ancient synagogue). Everyone's eyes were glued on Jesus. What would He say? Jesus simply said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Whether or not Jesus elaborated on this statement isn't known, but clearly Jesus claimed that He was God's Messiah. He had come to proclaim good news to needy people. He is our Messiah and Savior.

**Jesus offers Himself to us  
on His terms, not ours (4:22-27).**

While the initial reaction of the people in Nazareth was positive, even hopeful, toward Jesus, His subsequent statements pushed the issue of His true identity. Jesus would not be forced into their mould. We must accept Him on His terms.

***Everyone spoke favorably about Jesus and His words of grace, and wondered how this could be Joseph's son (4:22).***

All the people who heard Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth that day "bore witness" to Him. This phrase can be taken positively or negatively, but the fact that the next statement indicates a positive reaction points to a favorable response from the people. All the people spoke well of Jesus. They reflected on and marveled at His words, words of grace that came from His mouth. Apparently they were partially amazed that this home town son spoke as He did. Certainly the message itself, a message of

grace, stood out as well. They asked one another, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” Their question seems to indicate that the people of Nazareth weren’t ready yet to see Jesus as anything other than a mere man, not the Messiah and certainly not God in the flesh.

***Jesus acknowledged that no prophet finds acceptance in his own home town (4:23-24).***

Knowing that the people of Nazareth balked at His claims, Jesus cited what was probably a proverbial statement of that day, “Physician, heal yourself.” In other words, prove your claims by your actions. “Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.” Although Capernaum hasn’t been mentioned specifically in Luke prior to this event, Jesus’ ministry throughout Galilee must have included activities in that lakeside village. Jesus went on to say that no prophet is accepted in his own hometown. Familiarity breeds contempt. While disappointing, Jesus’ rejection by those who knew Him well was in many ways to be expected.

***Jesus reminded the people that the prophets Elijah and Elisha were rejected at home and were sent to help Gentiles (4:25-27).***

To prove His point about rejection, Jesus reminded the people of Nazareth about the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah prophesied during an extended time of famine in Israel. Many widows and orphans suffered during this famine, but Elijah wasn’t sent to any of them. Instead, God sent Elijah to a woman in Zarephath, in the Gentile region of Sidon. Likewise the prophet Elisha wasn’t sent to help any of the lepers in Israel in his day. Only a Gentile, a man from Syria named Naaman, was cleansed of his leprosy. Jesus, like Elijah and Elisha, had a broader view of the world and its needs. He wouldn’t be limited by the expectations of the people in Nazareth. Jesus offers Himself on His terms, not ours.

**Jesus isn’t threatened by our rejection,  
but our rejection forfeits His saving grace (4:28-30).**

The truth Jesus taught cut deeply into the hearts of His audience. He had clearly proclaimed that His own home town would receive no special favors and that Jesus would even extend His ministry beyond Jewish circles. The people of Nazareth were enraged. But Jesus isn’t threatened by our rejection. We, however, lose tremendously when we reject Him.

***Everyone now turned against Jesus in anger and attempted to kill Him (4:28-29).***

All the people throughout Galilee had praised Jesus for His ministry in their midst (Luke 4:15). All the people in the village of Nazareth had spoken favorably about Jesus at first (Luke 4:22). Now all the people in the synagogue that day turned against Jesus. They were filled with anger over Jesus’ statements. They rose from their seats and forced Jesus outside the synagogue to the edge of town, to the brow of one of the steep hills in the area around Nazareth. The crowd intended to end Jesus’ life, to launch Him over the

edge of the cliff and eliminate Him from their presence. Such is the attitude of the unrepentant heart.

***Jesus walked away from the angry crowd and left Nazareth (4:30).***

Jesus would die, but not that day, not in that place, and not in that way. He would die in Jerusalem on a cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Although the people of Nazareth tried to kill Him that day, Jesus simply walked away. In some miraculous way the crowd, angered and ready to kill Jesus, parted and Jesus walked through their midst leaving Nazareth behind. He wasn't threatened by the rejection of the people, although their rejection must have grieved Him deeply. The people, however, forfeited the opportunity to experience Jesus' grace, love, and power. His words offended them, as the truth often does. Jesus would travel to other villages and present the good news to others, to people who would respond favorably to His message. Jesus and His message—His truth—still deserve our trust. He's fully worthy of our faith.