

Today this Scripture Has Been Fulfilled

Introduction

The Text

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:14–21)

The Green Hills of Christ’s Arrival

A. I love the time of year we’re approaching here in California. Summer is great and all, but I’m just not a fan of the dead, brown hills. I’ve learned to call them “golden” over the years, but I’m not fooling myself. I know they’re brown. I know they’re dead.

1. For me, nothing compares to the seasons when the hills are full emerald green, the flowers start to come, and the world is as it should be! So as we were driving back from Monterey on Thursday and I noticed the hills airbrushed with a subtle hue of green, something in me started to dance.

B. In our text, it’s as if the hills, which have been brown for centuries now for both Israel and the nations, are starting to turn green. God’s salvation, promised from of old, is starting to sprout in Christ!

Remembering What We’ve Seen

A. It is important that we remember what we’ve seen up to this point in Luke’s gospel.

1. Jesus has been conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35).
2. At His baptism He is anointed with the Holy Spirit and shown to be not only the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King of God, but the Pioneer of God’s new creation (3:22).
3. He is filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately led by the Spirit into the wilderness to face the devil in head to head combat (4:1).
4. Victorious, Jesus now “return[s] in the power of the Spirit to Galilee...” (4:14), where He enters into His public ministry on a mission to save the world.

- B. [Vv. 14-15](#) are given as a sort of summary statement of Jesus' entrance into ministry. [Vv. 16ff.](#) zoom in on one scene that stands forth as representative of that ministry.

The Spirit-Filled Life

- A. Before we move into that scene, let me share with you an observation that's been ministering to me. We are told that "[Jesus return\[s\] \[from the wilderness\] in the power of the Spirit to Galilee](#)" (v. 14a), and it seems He's immediately embarking on His mission: "[And He taught in their synagogues](#)" (v. 15a).
- B. Now think about this with me for a moment. If I just beat down the devil in head to head combat, after forty days of fasting and fighting in the wilderness, I'm resting on those laurels for a little while. I'm going to kick back, eat a good meal, watch a good movie, and take it easy.
1. But Jesus is relentless in His mission "[to seek and to save the lost](#)" (Luke 19:10). As the devil's retreating with his tailed tucked between his knees, Jesus doesn't break open the champagne, He makes a beeline for the people He's come to save. He's so others-focused.
- C. And here's the thing that moved me: this is the mark of the Spirit-filled life.
1. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and what that looks like is: "I am living for you." The Spirit-filled life is the outgoing, others-centered life.
- D. So beware of asking the Spirit to fill you. Be careful when you sing: "Holy Spirit you are welcome here, come flood this place and fill the atmosphere." Do we know what we are asking for?
1. When the Spirit comes, He gives us so much more than a tingly feeling or emotional experience, He gives us as a holy calling and an outgoing compulsion. "I must go out, I must love, I must move towards neighbor."
 - a. "[\[T\]he Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'](#)" (Acts 13:2b). Are you ready for that?

Priority of Place

- A. Now, Jesus comes in the power of this Spirit into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath day...to preach.
- B. It is clear from [vv. 14-15](#), and later on down in [v. 23](#), that Jesus has already been ministering in other synagogues and towns. Cross-referencing with the other gospel writers, this scene ([4:16-30](#)) seems to have taken place later in Jesus' ministry.

1. So why does Luke bring it forward to the front and give it priority of place in his gospel? This is after all the very first description Luke gives us of Jesus' public ministry. That seems important. What does he want us to see?
- C. Well, as he told Theophilus at the beginning of this book, he's put together an "orderly account" (1:3) of Jesus' accomplishments, and as such, he's put here at the beginning a scene that sets forward the major themes that will be developed through the rest of this gospel.
1. The themes of Jesus' (1) Identity (v. 18a); (2) Mission (vv. 18b-21); and (3) Rejection (vv. 22-30).
 - a. We will take up the first two this week, and the third next week.

(1) Jesus' Identity (v. 18a)

- A. Let's read starting at v. 16: "¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...'" (vv. 16-18a).

Where God Has Already Spoken, He Will Speak Again

- A. If I could say a quick word about Bible reading at this point.
1. If ever we needed help seeing it's worth, certainly this scene ought to suffice. For the Son of God Himself is seen, as was His custom, reading His Bible in the synagogue. The Incarnate Word gave Himself to the reading of the Inscripturated Word.
 2. And even more, we must see that it is from the Bible that Jesus speaks. For He reads the words of the Isaiah and then speaks to the congregation.
 - a. I would put forward that it is not so different today, whether in our corporate gatherings or in our personal devotions. We read from the Bible and Christ Himself comes to us and speaks.
 - i. We must not expect the Son of God to speak to us if we do not have our Bible's open. I worry about the person who has time to read the news, watch the TV, surf the web, stalk on Facebook, but has no time for reading the Bible. And then we complain because God is not speaking to us.
- B. O brothers and sisters, go where He has already spoken, and He will speak again!

The Messianic-Servant-Redeemer

- A. So Jesus opens up the scroll and reads. The reading is particularly drawn from [Isa 61:1-2](#). Then, with all eyes “fixed on him,” there is the declaration of fulfillment. But what exactly does this OT text tell us about Christ?
1. The first part of the Scripture reading points us towards His identity.
- B. It is perhaps impossible to do justice to the full flow of prophetic thought and expectation that Jesus is tapping into by reading from this text. In the book of [Isaiah](#), we are told that the apostasy, the God-dethroning rebellion, the sin-sickness of both Israel and the nations can only be remedied by one figure, by one coming individual.
1. And this individual will be marked out by the fact that the Spirit of God is upon Him.
- C. Consider [Isa 59](#), where God is grieving over the sins of Israel, over the fact that the very people He had set apart to be as priests to the nations are as unholy and sinful as everyone else: “The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. ¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head...” (vv. 15b-17a) and He Himself comes to makes things right! “[A] Redeemer will come to Zion” (v. 20a).
1. And of this Redeemer, the Lord says: “My Spirit . . . is upon you” (v. 21).
- D. In [Isa 59:20-21](#) this individual with the Spirit upon Him is called the Redeemer. In [Isa 42:1](#) He’s called the Servant. In [Isa 11:1-2](#) He’s shown to be the Messiah. He’s the Messianic-Servant-Redeemer.
1. And in [Luke 4:14-21](#), we come to see that His name is Jesus. Jesus is the lone figure, the coming One, the hope of Israel and the nations, and of everyone in this room!

(2) Jesus’ Mission (vv. 18b-21)

- A. But what precisely has He come to do? What mission has He been anointed by the Spirit to accomplish?
1. The second part of the Scripture reading from [Isa 61:1-2](#) fleshes this out for us. Let’s keep reading along with Jesus in [Luke 4:18b-19](#): “¹⁸...to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

The Jubilee

- A. The background to the text in Isaiah, and this “year of the Lord’s favor”, is the Year of Jubilee described by God for Israel in [Lev 25](#). The Year of Jubilee came as the last layer in the extensions of the Sabbath principle.

B. Let me quickly unfold the layers for you:

1. First there was the Sabbath day that came for them every 7th day, on the last day of every week, on which they were to rest from their labors. It was a way of honoring God as both their Creator ([Exo 20:11](#)) and Redeemer ([Deut 5:15](#)).
2. Then there was the Sabbath year that came every 7th year, where the land was allowed to lay fallow and have its rest.
3. And then there was the Year of Jubilee, which brought this principle to its highest expression. It was the Sabbath year of Sabbath years, meaning after 7 Sabbath years (49 years), the Year of Jubilee was declared (the 50th year). And in [Lev 25:10a](#) it is said of the this Year of Jubilee: “You shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.”
 - a. And this liberty meant a number of things: (1) Restoration of Property: Any property that had changed hands was restored to its original inherited line of ownership; (2) Remission of Debts: Any debts owed were forgiven; (3) Redemption of Slaves: Any debt-slaves were set free: and (4) Rest for the Land: The land, again was allowed to lay fallow.

C. It was a year of new beginnings. It was a year that reminded the people that the earth and all its fullness, even we His people, ultimately belong to the Lord. It was a year that displayed for all the gracious, redeeming, liberating heart of YHWH.

1. It was a year that was to point them forward to a coming final liberation—the dawning of a new age in which justice, righteousness, liberty, love, peace would flourish!

D. And Jesus, in a little synagogue, in a little town, reads this text, sits down, and says: “[Today this Scripture has been fulfilled!](#)” God has anointed Him with the Spirit to redeem a people and usher in this new age!

The Have-Nots and the Can-Nots

A. He’s initiating a holy revolution. In a world where oppression, injustice, violence, depravity hold sway, Christ has come to push back, to form a new humanity around Himself.

B. Now, let me ask you: if you are attempting to start a revolution who do you try to enlist for your team? Is it not the rich and the famous, the wise and the powerful?

1. Think of the political campaigning in our day. At their national convention, each candidate tried to showcase the celebrities that are for them. This adds clout and credibility to their cause. I remember it wasn’t looking good for the Donald. While Hillary had her Hollywood entourage, Trump had the dude from Duck Dynasty, and that was about it.

- a. But one thing is for sure: no one wants me on their stage. I'm a nobody. My opinion is irrelevant.
- C. Well, nobodies are the kind of people Jesus wants on His stage. His revolution begins with the lowest and the least, the have-nots and the can-nots. The **poor**, the **captive**, the **blind**, the **oppressed**.
 - 1. Do any of those describe you?

Physical and Spiritual

- A. But this begs the question: Are Luke's categories here physical or spiritual?
 - 1. We live in Silicon Valley. By the world's standards, we are certainly not poor. So are we out? Are there economical, political, physiological, social standards required for entrance into the kingdom of God?
 - a. Again, are Luke's categories here physical or spiritual?
- B. The answer of course is: yes, both.
 - 1. On the one hand we must not say that Jesus is only concerned with the physical. For this would contradict the fundamental purpose of His arrival—to free us from the oppression of the devil, to release us from the debt we owe God for our sins.
 - 2. But on the other hand, we must not overreact and claim that Jesus only has concern for the spiritual. For this would contradict the concern He has all over this gospel for the physical plights of His people. I mean you just drop down a few vv. from here and He's healing bodies ([Luke 4:38-40](#)).
 - 3. The new age of Jesus' Jubilee will finally touch all of creation—including both the soul and the body, both the religious and the economical, social, political.
- C. So the point here is not that Jesus is only willing to help the physically desperate. But I do think it is implied that the physically desperate are often the most willing to receive His help.
 - 1. A person's physical need often alerts him to his spiritual need and throws His heart open to the possibility of a relationship with Christ.
- D. Take "**the poor**" for example. It's the physically poor who often recognize their spiritual poverty.
 - 1. "[I]t is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" ([Luke 18:25](#)) not because Jesus is opposed to money, but because money often blinds us to our true poverty and need for God. It gives us the illusion of self-sufficiency. Why would I come looking for Jesus' Jubilee and a new beginning when I'm quite happy with what I have?

- a. This is why the rich young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:22). And it’s why “those who are poor in the world . . . [are often] rich in faith” (James 2:5). They don’t have anything but Jesus to cling to.
- E. So, though Luke only uses physical categories here, He most certainly has both the physical and spiritual realms in mind.

Where Are You?

- A. Let me ask: Where are you in all of this? If you feel poor, captive, blind, oppressed; if you feel unable to save yourself and desperate for salvation to come in from outside; Hear Jesus say to you this morning what He said to those Israelites 2000 years ago: “Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21). He’s come for you! He’s here for you!
- B. With the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation coming up tomorrow, it seemed appropriate to quote Martin Luther on this point. Speaking into a church culture that thought they could earn their way into God’s favor, he writes: “God receives none but those who are forsaken, restores health to none but those who are sick, gives sight to none but the blind, and life to none but the dead. He does not give saintliness to any but sinners, nor wisdom to any but fools. . . . He has mercy on none but the wretched and gives grace to none but those who are in disgrace.”
 - 1. So long as we think we have something to give God we can receive nothing from Him. But when at last we realize we have nothing to give God, we are ready to receive everything from Him!
 - a. Jesus has come for the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed. In other words: Jesus has come for me and you.

The Crucifixion and the Jubilee

- A. Let me ask one final question: How will Jesus accomplish this? Here is the announcement of the year of the Lord’s favor—of riches for the poor, of liberation for the captive and oppressed, of sight to the blind. But how will Jesus accomplish this? In a way that no Jew in that synagogue could have ever expected.
- B. The Messiah, the Servant, the Redeemer, would become the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed on the cross.
 - 1. He became poor so that we by His poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8:9), as they stripped Him not only of His dignity but of His clothes.
 - 2. He was led captive like a sheep to the slaughter (Isa 53:7), as they marched Him from Gethsemane to Calvary.
 - 3. He was made blind, as they blindfolded Him and struck Him across the face: “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” (Luke 22:64).
 - 4. He was oppressed, as they mocked and jeered and nailed and crucified.

5. And all of this both physical and spiritual, as the wrath of God against our sin was poured out on Him.
- C. On that cross, He took on our debts so that in His resurrection He could proclaim the full accomplishment of our release!
1. This my brothers and sisters is why the Year of Jubilee in Israel was proclaimed by trumpet blast “[on the Day of Atonement](#)” (Lev 25:9)—on the day when sacrifices were made for the forgiveness of all sins in Israel. Everything’s been pointing to this.
 - a. In Jesus, you and I can be set free. In Jesus, the new age has begun. In Jesus, the hills are turning green. Let us turn to Him afresh this morning!