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Luke Chapter 4

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Abstract: A commentary on the events of Luke 4, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



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Luke Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION

Luke's stories about the Savior's temptations and his first forays into his Galilean ministry begin to uncover his majesty and disclose how he initially interacts with those around him. Plainly, this chapter sets the tone and texture for what follows throughout the Gospel. For Jesus will be the same: compassionate toward those who seek his aid, no matter their station in life, and brusque with those who dismiss him or deal contemptibly with him.

The towering edifice standing within this chapter consists of the spring-loaded launch pad of Jesus' ministry. Luke's narrative tells us how it all begins—in Jesus' hometown, Nazareth. For here the bright spotlight comes to rest on Jesus as he walks to his customary seat in the synagogue and then, arising, announces himself to friends and neighbors. To achieve this effect, Luke omits the stories of Jesus' prior preaching and healing in far off Capernaum, actions that the synagogue worshipers have not only heard about but, with the prospect that Jesus will perform similar miracles, likely motivate them to come to this service on this Sabbath (see 4:23).

A second chief theme of this chapter focuses tightly on power and authority, a theme unveiled in both the devil's temptations and Jesus' experience in the Nazareth synagogue. Further, Luke relates these stories to set the record straight about Jesus possessing the divine authority and power to call his disciples in chapter 5 (see the Note on 4:6 below). Woven into these accounts is a twofold pattern, word and deed: Jesus announces who he is—the authorized One—to the congregation at Nazareth, and the proof stands forth in his miracles, a pattern that follows the blueprint of the Father's announcement of Jesus' identity at his baptism and the Son's notable ability to withstand the devil's enticements.

Miracles begin to appear in this chapter as a strong and brightening glow in the fabric of the Savior's ministry. As we have noted, they emblazon the proof of who Jesus is and what he is empowered to do. The miracles begin

before he strides into Nazareth in those days, as his remark in the synagogue shows: “whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country” (4:23), which leads us to wonder whether the miracle stories that frame the end of Luke 4 actually occur before his trip to Nazareth (see the Note on 4:23). Whatever the case, we notice especially his remark when healing the paralyzed man, “that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins” (5:24), a declaration that wraps together the power to heal and the power to forgive sins. Moreover, it seems that the sequential order of the miracles builds in strength, creating an intensifying crescendo of sorts, starting in chapter 4 with Jesus casting out “a spirit of an unclean devil” from a man in the Capernaum synagogue (see 4:33–35) and then rising to his healing of the man “taken with a palsy” which involves engaging and vanquishing a long-standing disease (see 5:18–25). It is as if he is taking back territory from the devil who has held sway for a long time.¹

An important insight into Jesus’ ministry, and into our own lives as well, appears twice in the opening lines of this chapter (see 4:1–30). It has to do with another pattern, that of first receiving an outpouring of the Spirit of God and thereafter facing temptation and trial. Jesus receives the Spirit of God both after baptism (see 3:22; 4:1) and after overcoming the temptations of the devil (see 4:14). In scenes following these events, Jesus undergoes temptation and trial, initially at the instigation of the devil after his baptism (see 4:2–13), and next in his hometown of Nazareth when acquaintances fiercely turn on him and seek his death (see 4:16–30).

A further pattern connects to this one, reversing it, and it too exhibits a sequential component. It consists of first successfully overcoming temptation and trial and then receiving an outpouring of the Spirit. The Savior masters the temptations of the devil and thereafter receives “the power of the Spirit” (4:14). Thus, as with Jesus, we “receive no witness [from God’s Spirit] until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6).

In Nazareth, Jesus provokes the synagogue worshipers by deliberately referring to God’s blessings to Gentiles as found in the Old Testament, namely, those that came through the prophets Elijah and Elisha (see 4:25–27). Why? Is it a matter of Jesus eliciting a reaction that draws out, say, the prejudices of the crowd? That is, is his agenda chiefly one of social reform? Or should we see a deeper thrust, one that tests and measures the spiritual character of those in the synagogue that day? Luke, it appears, wants his readers to see the latter.

1. *TDNT*, 3:213, 399–401; Green, *Luke*, 521.

TEMPTATIONS

(4:1–13)

(Compare Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13)

King James Translation

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

New Rendition

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, turned back from the Jordan, and was led in the wilderness by the spirit 2 for forty days to be tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days, and when they were ended, he was hungry.

3 And the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, say to this stone that it become bread.” 4 And Jesus replied to him, “It is written that man shall not live by bread alone [but by every word of God].”

5 And after the devil had taken him up, he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth in a single moment of time. 6 And the devil said to him, “I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, because it is entrusted to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if you will worship me, all shall be yours.” 8 And answering, Jesus said to him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and shall serve him only.’”

9 And he took him to Jerusalem and stood him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written that, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, that they protect you,’ 11 and that, ‘They will carry you in their hands so that you will not stub your foot against a stone.’” 12 And answering, Jesus said to him, “It is said, ‘Thou shalt not test the Lord your God.’”

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

13 And when the devil had finished each test, he left him for a time.

Notes

4:1 *Jesus . . . returned*: This expression is repeated in 4:14. In both passages, the idea ties pointedly to guidance from God’s Spirit and to geography. In this passage, the verb (Greek *hypostrephō*) properly means “to turn back” or “to depart,”² evidently meaning that he withdraws from a place of ordinances and spiritual manifestation to a place that will test his resolve to make these elements a part of his ministry.

***being full of the Holy Ghost*:** First, the sequence is important. Jesus carries the Holy Ghost as a companion, but only after receiving John’s “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (3:3). If one holds up Jesus as the exemplar in receiving baptism (as in 2 Ne. 31:5–9), the point is inescapable. We receive the Holy Ghost only after receiving baptism at the hand of one of God’s agents, and the Holy Ghost then accompanies us in our return to our normal lives. Second, the Holy Ghost has now come upon the Savior (see 3:22), and his presence undergirds Jesus’ authority, allowing Luke to write that Jesus “returned in the power of the Spirit,” and thereafter empowering Jesus to declare of himself, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (4:14, 18).

***Jordan*:** By repeating this name, Luke ties Jesus firmly and purposefully to the Baptist who has earlier begun his activity in “all the country about Jordan” (3:3).

***led by the Spirit*:** The Greek expression is “led *in* the Spirit,” which carries a subtle difference in meaning, one in which the Spirit is more of a companion than a guide. Even so, a sense of Jesus’ submissiveness arises from these words. Moreover, the companionship of the Spirit forms a litmus test of Jesus’ messiahship (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”—4:18).

***into the wilderness*:** The earliest three manuscripts that preserve verse one, all papyrus, omit this phrase, although the Joseph Smith Translation holds onto it. If in fact Luke does not write this expression, and if he does not write “into an high mountain” (see the Note on 4:5), he may not have wanted to place the temptations within a known geography. In contrast, Matthew’s phrase “into the wilderness” commits his account to a region east of Jerusalem known as the Judean wilderness where, evidently in his

2. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1896; BAGD, 855.

view, the temptations occur (see Matt. 4:1). But Luke may be thinking that Jesus undergoes the temptations nearer Galilee, a more natural place if one judges that Jesus, after his baptism, likely turns toward home and, on the way, experiences the temptations. To be sure, when Jesus departs the green banks of the Jordan River, he is stepping back into the wilderness through which he has just walked. But Luke’s report seems to detach itself from the geography of the region.

4:2 *Being forty days tempted of the devil:* The Joseph Smith Translation omits this entire expression, substituting “And after forty days, the devil came unto him, to tempt him” (JST 4:2). The substituted words clarify that the devil does not approach Jesus during the forty days, in contrast to Luke’s notation. This observation receives support from a change in Matthew’s report. The expression “to be tempted of the devil” (Matt. 4:1) becomes “to be with God” (JST Matt. 4:1). See the Note below.

forty days: The number is challenged as too long for someone to fast, although modern research shows that it is possible.³ Each of the synoptic Gospels repeats the number forty, making it firm in the gospel tradition (see Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13). We see this length of time in other significant contexts (see Gen. 7:4; Ex. 24:18; 1 Kgs. 19:8; Acts 1:3; etc.).

tempted: The term (Greek *peirazō*) also can mean “to be tested” (see the Note on 22:28).⁴ Its immediate parallels tie to the period in the wilderness wherein God tests the Israelites (see Ex. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2; 13:2) and they test him (see Ex. 17:2; Num. 14:22; Ps. 95:8–9; 106:14). In this manner, the story of Jesus’ temptations may be intended to recall the Exodus, continuing the connections found in the account of John the Baptist (see the introduction to chapter 3 and the Note on 3:7). The account may also allude to Abraham’s test when “God did tempt [test] Abraham” by requiring him to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1).

the devil: Even if Luke is following Mark, his account differs from Mark’s in repeating this title; Mark writes “Satan” and Matthew, like Luke, writes “the devil” (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:13). In the Old Testament, the term “devils” arises in prohibitions about sacrificing to such creatures (see Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; 2 Chr. 11:15; Ps. 106:37).⁵ Prophecy anticipates Jesus’ encounters with the devil and his minions (see Mosiah 3:6).

3. Steve Hendricks, “Starving Your Way to Vigor: The Benefits of an Empty Stomach,” *Harper’s Magazine* (March 2012): 27–38.

4. BAGD, 646; *TDNT*, 6:23–28.

5. Hebrew *sa’ir* and *shed*; BDB, 972, 993–94.

he did eat nothing: We are left to imagine the enormous will power that Jesus exercises in wrestling down his appetites by refusing to eat. His challenge is foretold in prophecy: “he shall suffer . . . hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mosiah 3:7). It is curious that Luke writes nothing of Jesus’ not drinking. Perhaps he assumes his readers will conclude that Jesus does not drink for he separates eating and drinking in other passages (see 12:19; 13:26; 17:8; Acts 9:9; 23:12, 21). In certain places on both sides of the Jordan River, water is abundant.

when they were ended: As does Matthew, Luke clarifies that the devil approaches Jesus only at the end of the forty days, not during, though the opening words of this verse can be understood as affirming that the tests are sprinkled throughout the period of fasting. We can readily assume, with Luke, that Jesus spends a good deal of time in meditation, prayer, and in deciding what his messiahship should consist of (see the Note above on the change in the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse).

4:3 the devil said: The devil’s approach to Jesus is direct and without formality. In contrast, Matthew writes, “when the tempter came to him, he said . . .” (Matt. 4:3), as if his coming is through a sanctioned access. Perhaps Luke is underscoring the ready accessibility of Jesus to all, including the devil. For further on the devil, see the Analysis below; the Notes on 10:18–19; 11:18, 21–22; 13:16; 22:3, 31, 46, 53; the Analysis on 11:14–28 and 22:31–34.

If thou be the Son of God: The demeaning challenge in these words is obvious, throwing doubt on Jesus’ status with his Father (see also 4:9).

command this stone that it be made bread: We find allusion in this temptation to the creation account. At base, the devil teases Jesus to duplicate what is done at creation, to fashion from natural elements (soil, a stone) something that is very different in its nature (the man Adam, bread). At issue is Jesus’ status as Deity, now in human form, and his willingness to precisely follow his Father. While a heavenly, divine being, Jesus brings Adam to life. Now, in the wilderness, the devil challenges: Can he perform something similar, though less demanding? (As a sentient being, Adam is of course more complex than bread.) Naturally, all this assumes that Jesus possesses divine powers, that the scene with the devil is real, and that the devil recognizes Jesus for who he is from premortal life. Not all will grant these assumptions. But the act of creating bread from a stone echoes the act of creating Adam from the dust (see Gen. 2:7; Moses 3:7). This temptation is set off all the more sharply because the devil evidently does not tempt Jesus to satisfy his thirst, which is his main need in the desert. Of

course, the appearance of “stone” recalls the statement of the Baptist about God making children of Abraham from stones, forming a clear bridge back to John’s allusions to the creation account (see the Note on 3:8).

bread: The first issue feeds off of Jesus’ appetites. After long abstinence, is he in control? Making bread will not satisfy Jesus’ hunger, only eating it. But making bread will show not only his willingness to take the first step toward eating but also a sagging self-mastery. The second matter concerns sacred contexts that stand far from the Jordan Valley. For the mention of bread points both to its sacramental use in celebrating Jesus’ body and to Jesus’ banquet with his faithful followers in his kingdom (see 22:19—“This is my body” and 22:30—“That ye may eat . . . at my table in my kingdom”—see the Notes on 12:37; 13:25, 28; 14:15; 22:16–18, 30; the Analysis on 4:1–13 and 9:10–17).⁶ Hence, the act of making bread is to be viewed as a sacred gesture and draws to itself an anticipation of the Atonement as well as Jesus’ powers to save people into his kingdom. It is exactly these ties that grace the story of the feeding of the five thousand (see 9:10–17) and the feeding of the multitude at the Bountiful temple, a holy place (see 3 Ne. 20:1–9).⁷ Succumbing to the devil’s temptation will shred all such ties.

4:4 *Jesus answered him:* It may seem odd that Jesus converses with the devil. But the stakes are high, including whether Jesus can push away the devil’s enticements. The scene, of course, continues the eons-old rivalry that erupts at the grand Premortal Council wherein the two present to the Father competing plans for the earth’s future inhabitants. When the Father’s decision goes against Lucifer, who becomes the devil, he rebels (see Moses 4:1–4; Abr. 3:27–28; D&C 29:36–38).⁸

It is written: The expression points to accepted scripture that expresses God’s will in written form (see 2:23; 4:8, 10, 17; etc.; the Notes on 3:4; 24:44).⁹

man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God: A number of key manuscripts omit the latter of the two expressions. If the words “but by every word of God” are added later to fill out the full idea from Deuteronomy 8:3, possibly under the influence of Matthew 4:4, then Jesus’

6. John M. Madsen, “Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” in *EM*, 2:860.

7. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 150–52, 163–65; John W. Welch, “Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 16–31.

8. John L. Lund, “Council in Heaven,” in *EM*, 1:328–29; Brent L. Top, “War in Heaven,” in *EM*, 4:1546–47.

9. *TDNT*, 1:746–49, 758–59.

original emphasis rests not only on spiritual nourishment (“man shall not live by bread alone”) but, perhaps more broadly, on the kind of self-discipline that leads to a tried and proven personality (see D&C 98:11–15).¹⁰

4:5 *the devil, taking him up*: Two matters rise into view. First, the order of the next two temptations differs between Matthew and Luke. For here Matthew locates the event at the Jerusalem temple instead of on a mountain (see Matt. 4:5–7). Second, for the devil’s act of escorting Jesus, the Joseph Smith Translation substitutes “the Spirit taketh him up,” clarifying that the devil does not control Jesus’ whereabouts (JST 4:5).¹¹ Instead, in an exemplary act, Jesus submits himself to the Spirit, not to the devil. But we still face the question, Why does the Spirit seemingly cooperate with the devil by escorting Jesus to places of temptation and trial? The answer, it appears, has to do with Jesus’ need to subject himself to every dimension of mortal life, and then some (see Heb. 2:10, 18; 5:8–9; Mosiah 3:5–7; Alma 7:11–12; D&C 122:4–8). Incidentally, some early manuscripts omit the term “the devil.”

***into an high mountain*:** We note that some early manuscripts omit this phrase though the Joseph Smith Translation preserves it. What is secure is the expression “taking him up,” which points to an elevated spot. As is widely known, a high place is often associated with revelation and sacred acts (see Isa. 2:2–3; Moses 1:1; 1 Ne. 11:1). That this locale, wherever it lies, is intended to evoke a sense of worship appears in the devil’s words to Jesus about worshiping him in this place and Jesus’ response about the proper object of worship (see 4:7–8).

***shewed unto him all the kingdoms*:** The Joseph Smith Translation changes this expression to “he [Jesus] beheld all the kingdoms,” underscoring that Jesus is the initiator of action rather than the devil (JST 4:5). Thus, Jesus willingly engages himself with the temptation that we face—how we respond to the tinsel allure of the world.

***the world*:** In 2:1, this term (Greek *oikoumenē*), points to the world ruled by the Roman Empire.¹² But here it has to do with the realm controlled by the devil (“that [authority] is delivered unto me [the devil]”—4:6). Later, we learn that Satan possesses a “kingdom” that stands in opposition to the Father’s kingdom (see the Note on 11:18).¹³

10. Marshall, *Luke*, 171.

11. *TDNT*, 6:362.

12. BAGD, 563–64; *TDNT*, 5:157–59.

13. Johnson, *Luke*, 74.

in a moment of time: The phrase hints that visions and revelations can occur almost instantaneously. They can also occur over a longer period as Philo Dibble’s memory of Joseph Smith’s and Sidney Rigdon’s reception of section 76 indicates: “over an hour.”¹⁴

4:6 power: The term (Greek *exousia*) can and perhaps should be translated “authority,” though the rendition “power” is not incorrect (see the Notes on 1:35; 4:14, 36; 9:1; the Analysis below).¹⁵ At issue, of course, is the authority or power of the ruler of this world. Here the devil claims such power or authority for himself. But he does not succeed in turning Jesus toward himself. Instead, in one of Jesus’ first outings in Capernaum, following the temptations, Jesus both speaks “with power” and exhibits power in cleansing the afflicted man in the synagogue, thereby demonstrating that he does not need assistance from the devil (4:32, 36).

the glory of them: The emphasis of this temptation rests in these words. The devil offers to Jesus the glory and elegance of earthly kingdoms. But Jesus earlier chooses to come to the Baptist as others do, pointedly not drawing undue attention to himself (see 3:21). He adopts the low path of humility, not the elevated street lined with adoring crowds (see D&C 58:39).¹⁶

power . . . is delivered unto me: Although we might ask, Who delivers ruling authority to the devil? Jesus’ later words plainly acknowledge Satan’s counter realm: “If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?” (Luke 11:18). That Satan sees his authority as worthy of devotion is apparent in his meeting with Moses when Moses refuses to worship Satan because he lacks divine glory (see Moses 1:12–15).

to whomsoever I will I give it: Consistent with the view that the devil possesses a kingdom and authority within it is his claim to the power and inclination to confer his authority on others.

4:7 worship me: The Greek text reads “worship before me,” an expression that hints at a formal place of worship such as an altar or sanctuary, as in the words “before the Lord” (see Gen. 18:22; 27:7; Ex. 16:9; 23:17; 27:21; etc.). If Jesus and the devil are indeed on a natural prominence (see the Note on 4:5 above), then we come upon a clear sense that the devil

14. Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 158; Robinson and Garrett, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2:287.

15. BAGD, 277–78; TDNT, 2:564–71.

16. Morris, *Luke*, 113.

intends the encounter somehow to be understood as sacred and therefore strengthens his demand that Jesus worship him.

all shall be thine: So anxious is the devil to bring the Savior to his side that he seemingly is willing to give up all, leaving everything in Jesus' hands and keeping nothing for himself, just as he handed authority to Cain (see Moses 5:23–24, 30). But some of his past actions belie this notion (see Moses 1:12–22).

4:8 *Get thee behind me, Satan:* Although this expression appears in the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus and other later manuscripts, it is missing from the earlier fourth-century texts and is thus textually suspect, although Marshall believes that it is original owing to its presence in Matthew 4:10 at the climax of Matthew's record of this set of scenes.¹⁷ Whether or not this line was in Luke's original record, the meaning of these words is difficult to grasp, unless one understands the expression as "Begone!" However, if we envision a scene at an altar, whether of this world or not (see the Note on 4:7), several possible meanings appear. The Savior may be ordering the devil to depart from a genuine place of holiness where a worshiper can approach God, as in the temple.¹⁸ Or he may be directing Satan to remove himself from the altar where the priest officiates. Or, additionally, Jesus may be informing the devil that the latter has no authority to officiate in a sacred place, as priests do ("the priest that is anointed"—Lev. 4:3, 5).

it is written: This customary way of citing scripture (see 4:4) introduces Jesus' paraphrasing quotation of Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20, which the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text preserves most closely to Jesus' words. This quotation is Jesus' second from the book of Deuteronomy (see 4:4), which is one of the five books of the law and thus forms part of the most sacred section in Jewish scripture. By quoting from Deuteronomy, Jesus adds ballast to his response.

4:9 *he brought him:* Again, the Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that not the devil but "the Spirit brought him [Jesus] to Jerusalem" (JST 4:9).

to Jerusalem: For Luke, Jesus' final temptation takes place in Jerusalem just as Jesus' final trial of facing suffering and death will take place here.

a pinnacle of the temple: The stones in the temple's surrounding wall that stand at the greatest heights above ground are the southeast and southwest corners. Though some favor the southeast corner as the "pinnacle,"¹⁹ the

17. Marshall, *Luke*, 172.

18. Richman, *Holy Temple of Jerusalem*, 13.

19. Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *Ritual of the Temple*, 12.

more natural spot is the southwest corner where Jesus' stunning descent will be onto the busiest street in the city and, apparently, is the place where priests sound trumpets and horns on special occasions, including the beginning of the Sabbath.²⁰

4:10 *it is written:* This standard line introduces Psalm 91:11–12, a passage that, in the hands of the devil, passes as a prophecy about the Savior's announcement of himself as Messiah.

4:12 *It is said:* In noted contrast to how the devil begins his quotation (see 4:10), Jesus' answer points intriguingly to spoken words, though they exist only in written form at Deuteronomy 6:16. He thus makes his point more vivid, as if he is drawing directly from the living, revealing voice of God, thus placing his answer on a higher level than the written and sung words of the Psalms (see the Notes on 3:2, 4; 16:30). Moreover, a statement from the law carries more heft than one from the Psalms.

not tempt the Lord: The plain meaning is that one is not to tempt or test—the meaning of this term (Greek *ekpeirazō*)²¹—the Lord to do something that he would not otherwise do, such as to spend divine power on the frivolous or the spectacular. In fact, Jesus has already chosen the path of obedience to God, the road of humility and common behavior rather than one of glitter, as his approach to John and his baptism have shown (see the Note on 3:21). More pointedly, the Savior may well be commanding Satan to tempt him no more.

4:13 *he departed . . . for a season:* The devil, who effectively—and figuratively—leaves Jesus in Jerusalem, will later return personally to Jerusalem during the days before the crucifixion to influence Judas, one of the Savior's closest companions (see the Note on 22:3). Not incidentally, the phrase translated “for a season” means “until a (certain) time” with the term for “season” (Greek *kairos*) having to do with a critical or decisive moment, pointing to other moments of testing and very possibly to the last days of Jesus' life (see the Notes on 1:20; 19:44; 21:8).²² In a different vein, according to Matthew 4:11, when the devil departs, “angels came and ministered unto [Jesus].” The Joseph Smith Translation makes a significant adjustment before this statement by adding sixteen words: “*now Jesus knew that John was cast into prison, and he sent angels, and, behold, they came and ministered unto him*” (JST

20. Josephus, *B.J.* 4.9.12 (§582); Schürer, *History*, 2:446–47; Dan Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, trans. Shlomo Ketko (Jerusalem: Carta, 1996), 44.

21. BAGD, 243.

22. BAGD, 128, 395–96; *TDNT*, 3:455–62; 6:35–36; Johnson, *Luke*, 75.

Matt. 4:11). Thus, even though Jesus is in the extremity of enduring physical privation and withstanding the onslaughts of the devil, he thinks of his cousin's afflictions and sends angels to minister to him. In a correction, angels do not minister to Jesus.

Analysis

The verses that treat the temptations focus on control, not only on Jesus' discipline of himself but also on his harnessing of matters beyond himself (animals, kingdoms). At the front, in the emphatic position, we encounter Jesus' storied effort to control his appetites by fasting. Subduing his appetites as he begins his ministry will serve him well as time goes on and will also stand as an example to his followers. For, as an angel prophesies about one hundred fifty years before this moment, "he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7). In a way, we suppose, Jesus is testing the limits of his physical being as he gathers himself to step into his public ministry.

A second matter has to do with Jesus' steely determination to remain obedient to his Father. This dimension arises clearly in his oft-repeated references to obeying God: "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. . . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. . . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (4:4, 8, 12). Thus, Jesus' words disclose that the temptation to disobey God runs through his encounter with the devil.²³

A third issue concerns elements of this world that lie beyond Jesus' person. Although Luke does not make evident Jesus' interaction with the natural order during these momentous days, Mark does so when he writes that Jesus "was with the wild beasts" (Mark 1:13). This expression forms a clear pointer to the messianic age when all of nature will be at peace (see Isa. 11:6–9). In his turn, Luke dwells on how the Savior will interact with the human world through the latter two temptations. One has to do with the kingdoms of this world whose tinsel, noisy allurements Jesus resists. The other features the temptation that Jesus announce his messiahship in a spectacular public manner by jumping off a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. Again, Jesus resists the obvious popular admiration that will surely come to him in the aftermath of such a spectacle. His messiahship will not follow the fawning paths of the world.

A fourth dimension signals Jesus' ability to deal with the powers of the unseen world. The fact that the devil comes personally to the wilderness

23. *TDNT*, 6:33–35.

where Jesus is, and the later note that Satan possesses a “kingdom” (see the Note on 11:18), both underscore this dimension. For the duration of his ministry, the Savior will face unseen powers in the form of “devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men” (Mosiah 3:6; also 1 Ne.11:31). In each future meeting, the minions of Satan will try to challenge and draw down Jesus’ powers. The story of the temptations thus frames Luke’s first written notice of Jesus encountering this unseen world and triumphing over it. This triumph over the devil and his agents frames one of the chief reasons for his mortal ministry (see the Notes on 11:21–22).²⁴

In this connection, we find a revealing blend of actions that the Savior initiates and others that he does not. These incidents are carried in the verbs that Luke repeats. For instance, as Luke opens this section of his record, he reports matter-of-factly that Jesus “returned from Jordan,” an action that Jesus initiates and carries through (4:1). Moreover, “he did eat nothing,” plainly an act of Jesus’ own will (4:2). Between these notices, we read that he “was led by the Spirit,” a circumstance that hails his submissiveness to a divine force outside himself. What do we make of these observations? Evidently, for Luke, Jesus’ actions arise from an exemplary blend of his own volition and his submissiveness. As Luke’s Gospel unfolds, it will frame a series of stories that further illustrate this point.

What we may find puzzling is the apparent omission of geographical notices in Luke’s account of the temptations. According to early Greek texts, neither the phrase “into the wilderness” nor the expression “into an high mountain” appear in Luke’s account (4:1, 5), although both of these phrases appear authentically in Matthew’s report (see Matt. 4:1, 8). But Luke’s research may have brought him to see these extraordinary moments in a different geographical light, or in no geographical light at all. Instead, he may have been universalizing the Savior’s struggles with the devil, untying them from a concrete setting and in effect setting them into a timelessness and a spatial independence that every reader can relate to.

On another level, virtually the whole of chapter 4 deals with Jesus’ power and authority. It is the devil who presents and pushes this set of issues by claiming authority—he of course possesses a form of authority and even a “kingdom” where he exercises it (see the Note on 11:18)—and then offering it to Jesus: “that [authority] is delivered unto me” hisses the devil (4:6). And, if Jesus complies with his request, the devil temptingly promises “All this power [authority] will I give thee” (4:6). But rather than taking up the

24. *TDNT*, 3:399–401.

devil's vacant claims and resolving them on the spot, Jesus simply pushes away the issues by quoting scripture: "it is written." Significantly—and this point is most important—Jesus resolves the question of who truly holds authority and power later, inside synagogues (see the Notes on 4:18; 5:24; the Analysis on 4:16–30).

After the temptations and the posturing and the grandiose assertions of the devil, Luke follows the Savior into two synagogues where Jesus finally confronts the devil's claims. Within the walls of synagogues, within religious institutions of Jesus' world, not the devil's, Jesus discloses first his divine authority and then his power. For after Jesus "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," we find him first "on the sabbath day" in the Nazareth synagogue where he announces himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me" (4:14, 16, 18). Here is the grand announcement of the ages; here, on this man, rests God's holy authority; here, with this man, comes God's Spirit. Then, after congregants forcefully reject Jesus at Nazareth, Luke goes with him into the Capernaum synagogue where, in a tingling moment of disclosure, he casts out "a spirit of an unclean devil" from a man. Those present in that synagogue, although "amazed," recognize that Jesus' powerful act exhibits "authority and power" (4:33, 36).

Within this sequence of events a reader comes to recognize that the Savior chooses to announce his authority and power inside the institution of the synagogue, an institution of devotion and worship and ordinances and learning. This is the proper place for God's Spirit and its holy manifestations; this is the proper place of ordinances and their enduring influence; this is the proper place of sacred teaching and learning. On one level, the reports from the synagogues in Nazareth and Capernaum settle the questions of true power and authority, questions that the devil first throws up to Jesus in the wilderness. On another, we see that God's authority and power are manifested in institutions of worship—in this case, synagogues—that enjoy the authorizing presence of the Savior. It is an easy step from the synagogue to the church. For at this point, the distance between the synagogue where Jesus and his contemporaries worship and the church which will arise from his work is paper thin.

Jesus' delayed response to the devil's challenges that is manifest in his later words and actions in synagogues mirrors his delay in answering temple authorities' demands to know the source of his authority during the last week of his life. At first he refuses (see 20:1–8; the Note on 20:8); only then does he rehearse a parable that discloses his answer (see 20:9–16).

Another, more subtle, link to genuine authority lies in these verses. We come upon it in words that tie the Savior to the Baptist who, as Luke writes, receives his authorizing mission when “the word of God came unto John . . . in the wilderness” (3:2). Despite the fact that Luke’s record of Jesus’ baptism seemingly diminishes the bond between the Baptist and Jesus (see 3:21–22),²⁵ this bond remains firm throughout the rest of his work (see 7:18–29; 9:18–19; 20:1–8; Acts 1:5, 21–22; 10:36–38; 13:24–25). Luke reports that John’s ministry opens in “the country about Jordan” and then notes that Jesus “returned from Jordan” to begin his own work, thus tying their heaven-led efforts together by mentioning the name Jordan (3:3; 4:1). The second thread consists of “these stones” to which the Baptist points and from which, he declares, God can “raise up children unto Abraham” (3:8). Luke then quotes the devil as referring to “this stone,” the same words though in singular form, from which he invites Jesus to create “bread” (4:3). The verbal tie between the two accounts is strong. The additional allusion to the creation account in each of these references (see the Note on 4:3) reinforces the connecting links between John and his authority and Jesus and his authority.

In this same vein, the words translated “power” and “authority” are the Greek *dynamis* and *exousia*. At times, the KJV translators do not distinguish between these terms. More properly, *dynamis* represents sheer power as manifested in miracles (as in 4:14 and 4:36—*dynamis* is the term translated “power” in 4:36).²⁶ In other passages in this chapter, we encounter *exousia*, more properly rendered as “authority,” as in 4:36 where the term appears correctly translated (elsewhere *exousia* is translated “power” as in 4:6 and 4:32).²⁷ As we have already noticed, these two concepts lie at the heart of chapter 4, and the resolution of the question, Who holds true authority? frames the rest of the Gospel story.

In another vein, we ask, Why does the devil not appeal to Jesus’ thirst rather than to his hunger alone? Is there some theological dimension of this scene which will explain this sort of entreaty? For water is the most important need in the desert. Although we can think of a number of important theological connections to water, none seem relevant here. But Jesus’ act of making bread points to his hosting of the future messianic banquet.

25. Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960), 20; Johnson, *Luke*, 69.

26. BAGD, 206–7; *TDNT*, 2:299–308.

27. BAGD, 277–78; *TDNT*, 2:562–70.

In this connection, we highlight Jesus' promise to the eleven at the Last Supper: "I appoint unto you a kingdom . . . That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones" (22:29–30). In a word, this latter occasion is to be formal and grand, with food at its center (see the Notes on 4:3; 12:37; 13:25, 28; 14:15; and 22:16–18, 30; the Analysis on 9:10–17).²⁸ The devil's mention of bread also anticipates Jesus' miracle of feeding the five thousand and of his hosting the Passover at the Last Supper (see 9:10–17; 22:19). In sum, making bread will identify Jesus as the Messiah—but here inappropriately, because of the coaxing presence of the devil.

Throughout these verses, Luke consistently writes the term "the devil" rather than some other title such as Satan or "the tempter" as in Matt. 4:3. The only exception occurs in Luke 4:8, "Get thee behind me, Satan," whose originality remains in question because this expression is missing from the earliest manuscripts, though the Joseph Smith Translation holds onto it. To be sure, Luke writes "Satan" elsewhere in his narrative and evidently intends that we see the devil and Satan as the same individual (see 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; Acts 5:3; 26:18; D&C 76:25–28). This point is important for the question about how closely Luke may be following known sources, such as Mark, who repeats only the name Satan (see Mark 1:13).

The issue of Luke's sources also arises when we ask about the order of the temptations that he preserves. At first glance, Luke appears to follow the details of Matthew's account but rearranges the order of the temptations. Matthew's arrangement is bread, pinnacle, mountain; Luke's ordering is bread, mountain, pinnacle. Mark reports merely that Jesus is "in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan," with no mention of fasting or of the individual temptations (Mark 1:13). Setting aside the introductory lines in Matthew and Luke, which do not match (see Matt. 4:1–2; Luke 4:1–2), we focus on three other elements. The first has to do with how Matthew and Luke reproduce Jesus' introduction of Deuteronomy 6:16: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," a line that responds to the devil's suggestion that Jesus jump from the temple's pinnacle. Matthew writes, "Jesus said unto him, It is written . . ." (Matt. 4:7). As we have seen, Luke records Jesus as saying, "It is said . . ." (4:12), which brings an entirely different cast to the scene. There is little value in speculating which Gospel writer is correct. We simply notice that the two reports differ about how Jesus introduces the quotation. At base, Luke's report supports a view that Jesus not only carries

28. Madsen, "Marriage Supper of the Lamb," 2:860; Dennis E. Smith, "Messianic Banquet," in *ABD*, 4:788–91.

the living voice of God within himself but especially understands that the written scripture consists of God's living, authoritative words which in effect speak audibly, even loudly to an attuned reader.

The second concerns the phrase "into an high mountain." As already seen, the phrase is original in Matthew's account (see Matt. 4:8) but, because it does not appear in the earliest manuscripts of Luke, it is possibly added to his Gospel by a later hand to harmonize it with Matthew's report (see 4:5). The phrase is vivid and gives context to the devil's temptation. From our perspective, Luke will add this important color to his account if he knows it, especially because of its connection with holiness or sacred space. Hence, it seems that Luke or his source is not aware of this detail. However, the temptation at a "pinnacle of the temple" does tie to a sacred spot and, additionally, to a height which carries its own sense of holiness. Here we behold the devil's effort to create a counterfeit experience by mimicking that which belongs to the realm of God.

The third and final expression is "Get thee behind me, Satan" (4:8). Marshall is probably right that these words form the conclusion of the series of temptations and establish Matthew's order as original.²⁹ If so, then we have to explain Luke's quotation of Jesus' words either as an attempt by a later hand to harmonize Luke's account of the mountain scene with Matthew's or, if they are original with Luke, as his conscious placement of these words in the middle of the temptations where they seem out of place. In either case, Luke is not following Matthew's order and thus is likely not following an earlier document that he and Matthew might each have consulted and drawn upon.

The final item to treat consists of Jesus' quotations of scripture. What strikes the reader first is the devil's willingness to quote a scriptural passage in order to confer a sense of celestial purpose on his words. But Jesus quickly overturns this trickery. The devil's quotation of Psalm 91:11–12 elicits the Savior's quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16, a passage taken from the law that trumps any passage from the Psalms, as the order of Jesus' words about the divisions of scripture illustrates in 24:44 ("the law . . . the prophets . . . the psalms").

A relevant matter consists of Jesus' resort to the written text of scripture when responding to each of the three temptations. Much scholarship wrestles with these quotations, discussing whether and, if so, how closely Jesus is quoting the Hebrew text, or whether Luke, in reporting Jesus' words,

29. Marshall, *Luke*, 172.

is reproducing the version from the Septuagint. In the end, a resolution of such questions makes little difference. Why? Because in other places where reports about Jesus' excerpting from a sacred text are more secure, he shows a marked tendency to quote and adapt. Perhaps the most ready set of passages stands in the book of 3 Nephi where the Savior quotes from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Micah, and Malachi, besides the sermon to be recorded in Matthew 5–7.³⁰ One remarkable example of adapting appears in Jesus' quotation of the prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 19. Although, as the Risen Savior, he says that he is quoting Moses' words that appear in this pair of passages, the quotation agrees fully neither with the Hebrew text nor with the Greek (see 3 Ne. 20:23). What becomes plain is that Jesus feels free to adapt the scriptural text to suit his needs. And why not? After all, he is the one who inspired the text in the first place.

BEGINNING OF GALILEAN MINISTRY (4:14–15)

(Compare Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14–15)

King James Translation

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

New Rendition

14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And news concerning him went throughout the whole surrounding country. 15 And he began to teach in their synagogues, being praised by all.

Notes

4:14 *Jesus returned:* Luke's language implies that Jesus comes from Galilee. Although we find no direct note about Jesus' continued residence in Galilee except the notice in 2:51 ("he . . . came to Nazareth"), later occurrences of his name, "Jesus of Nazareth," point plainly to Galilee (see 4:34; 18:37; 24:19; Acts 3:6; 10:38; 26:9). Clearly, he is now on his way back, after a forty-day stop. More significantly, we can see this return trip from the

30. For instance, for Gen. 12:3, 18:18, and 22:18, see 3 Ne. 20:25, 27; for Isa. 54, see 3 Ne. 22; for Micah 5:8–14, see 3 Ne. 21:12–18; for Mal. 3–4, see 3 Ne. 24–25; and for Matt. 5–7, see 3 Ne. 12–14.

Jordan Valley as somehow a reverse course to the one that he will undertake later on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem for the last time.

power of the Spirit: The reference must point to spiritual guidance and authorization (see 3:22; 4:1; the Note on 4:18), but the term “power” (Greek *dynamis*) also hints at Jesus’ miraculous power, as Paul’s terminology shows (see, for example, 1 Cor. 2:4; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thes. 1:5).

there went out a fame of him: As we learn later, Jesus’ sudden reputation rests on his miraculous powers exhibited in Capernaum (see 4:23), although Luke evidently does not preserve an account of these early miracles, unless we see some of the events reported in 4:31–7:17 as preceding his visit to Nazareth. Jesus’ sudden reputation doubtless rests on deep impressions on eyewitnesses of his miracles and teachings, a phenomenon that some call “the shared recollections of a group” (see 4:32, 36; 5:26). After Jesus calls the Twelve (see 6:13), these men become first rank witnesses and often share others’ awe (see 5:9; 8:56; 9:43; 10:23–24; 20:26).³¹

4:15 he taught in their synagogues: The verb (Greek *didaskō*) appears to be an inchoative or incipient imperfect, marking the beginning of an activity.³² Luke announces the pattern that he has found in his research on Jesus’ activities: Jesus teaches where crowds gather. Later, he will send messengers who herald his arrival in towns (see 9:52 and the Note thereon). Herein we sense an underlying urgency in Jesus’ efforts, even early in his ministry, to reach as many people as he can.

being glorified of all: The basic sense of the active verb (Greek *doxazō*) is “to honor” or “to praise.”³³ Hence, the initial response of his hearers at this early stage of Jesus’ ministry is to honor him. Over time, of course, some will come to respond very differently. A hint also exists here that, in his teaching, Jesus’ glory shines out.

Analysis

The Savior’s return to Galilee will mirror in a reverse way his eventual return to Jerusalem through the Jordan Valley at the end of his ministry. For instance, the “fame of him” that spreads throughout Galilee also precedes his arrival at the Jordan Valley town of Jericho as the response of the blind man and the publican Zaccheus demonstrate (see 4:14; 18:35–39; 19:1–6; the Note on 18:37). Moreover, his return to Galilee “in the power of the

31. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 93–132, 146–49, 313–14.

32. BAGD, 191; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1900.

33. *TLNT*, 1:376–78.

Spirit” is fulfilled concretely in two separate scenes tied to his final visit to the south. First, as Jesus and his followers approach Jericho, the blind one cries “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.” After meeting the man, Jesus responds, “Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight” (18:38, 42–43). Though we hear of Jesus giving sight to blind persons in Galilee (see 7:21–22), this story forms Luke’s only full account of Jesus’ remarkable power over sight. And it occurs as the Savior approaches Jerusalem for the last time, bringing sight and light to those who will receive them.

Second, Jesus’ powers appear in his later cleansing of the temple in the presence of both the temple police and Roman soldiers who are evidently unable to restrain him (see 4:14; the Note on 19:45).³⁴ A hint of his remarkable powers, which might explain the inability of police and soldiers to curb him, lies in the account of Jesus riding across the Mount of Olives amid the adoring and noisy crowd of his followers. At one point, “some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.” The Savior’s response to them must have been surprising, though not if they were to witness his raw powers uncovered when calming the Sea of Galilee (see 8:22–25). He declares, as he crosses the Mount of Olives, “if these [disciples] should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” in a worshipful acknowledgment of the king of nature (19:39–40).

In a different vein, verses 4:14–15 set out two other important elements in Jesus’ teaching ministry. By noting that Jesus “taught in their synagogues,” Luke points first to the fact that he is aware of Jesus’ pattern of seeking to meet people where they gather in large numbers. Such an approach, of course, allows the Savior to reach more hearers than if he chiefly teaches individuals or small groups. In fact, during his later extended journey to Jerusalem, he sends “messengers before his face . . . to make ready [the crowds] for him” (9:52). The presence of crowds also means that his audiences are mixed between those who accept his message and those who do not, bringing both admiration and confrontation. The second aspect has to do with the hinted urgency in Luke’s notice of synagogue teaching. Of course, we become keenly aware of Jesus’ sense of urgency during his last days in mortality because he takes off the veil from his parables and speaks in much more direct language (see the parable of the pounds in 19:11–27;

34. Josephus reports that, during festivals, soldiers of the Roman garrison stationed at the Antonia fortress, which adjoins the temple, take up positions on the long roofs of the porches that surround the Court of the Gentiles (see Josephus, *B.J.* 2.12.1 [§224]).

the parable of the vineyard in 20:9–16; the saying about the stone in 20:17–18; and the Notes thereon). However, a similar urgency lies just beneath the surface as Jesus seeks to maximize his effectiveness in the early stages of his Galilean ministry.

RETURN TO NAZARETH (4:16–30)

(Compare Matt. 13:53–58; Mark 6:1–6)

King James Translation

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

New Rendition

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been raised, and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his custom and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, and after unrolling the book, he found the place where it is written, 18 “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to declare good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberation to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away with mercy the downtrodden, 19 and to proclaim the welcome year of the Lord.” 20 And when he had rolled up the book and given it to the attendant, he sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed intently upon him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears.” 22 And everyone began to speak well of him and were astonished at the gracious words that came out of

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

his mouth, and they kept saying, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”

23 And he said to them, “You will doubtless tell me this proverb: ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ As many things as we have heard were done in Capernaum, do here also, in your hometown.” 24 But he said, “Truly I say to you that no prophet is accepted in his homeland. 25 But in truth I say to you that there were many widows in the days of Elijah in Israel, when the heaven was shut for three years and six months, with the result that a great famine came upon all the land. 26 And Elijah was sent to none of them but to a widow woman in Zaraphath of the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet, and none of them were cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

28 And all that were in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things. 29 And getting up, they threw him out of the city and drove him to the edge of the hill on which their city was built so that they could throw him down from it. 30 But he, passing through the middle of them, went on his way.

Notes

4:16 *he came to Nazareth*: This trip to his hometown, undertaken after he is already active in Capernaum (see 4:23), may possibly tie to accounts in Matthew and Mark of his visit to “his own country” during which he preaches in the synagogue, impresses hearers with his “wisdom,” but is able to do little else because of “unbelief” (Matt. 13:53–58; Mark 6:1–6). A decisive difference may be that, according to Matthew and Mark, Jesus brings his disciples but, according to Luke, disciples are not yet gathered around him, pointing to an independent story.³⁵

35. Plummer, *Luke*, 118.

where he had been brought up: Luke notes no unusual characteristics about Jesus' youth or about his home. His very concise sketch outlines a normal upbringing (see the Notes on 2:51 and 8:21).

as his custom was: Luke's language underscores that Jesus attends synagogue services regularly, hinting that people in Nazareth remember his presence, particularly as a youth living among them. Evidently he also enjoys the learning atmosphere that synagogue officials generally cultivate and that form the beginning of his education.³⁶

he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day: Jesus' act illustrates his respect for his upbringing. After all, the Sabbath is "a sign" between God and his people, "a perpetual covenant" that enriches their relationship, an eternal marker of holiness and sanctity (Ex. 31:13–17). Further, Jesus demonstrates deference for the customs that grow up in the synagogue and become incorporated into the Mosaic law (see the Notes on 16:16–17; 20:47).

synagogue: The origins of the synagogue as an institution remain hidden because of a lack of early evidence in written sources and in the archaeological record. Even so, synagogues are functioning fully in virtually every large town by the first century AD.³⁷ Although the English term "synagogue" appears in the record of Nephi, which dates to the sixth century BC (see 2 Ne. 26:26), we do not know the original term that Nephi inscribes in his record and therefore its range of meanings. More descriptive is Nephi's companion expression, "houses of worship," which may be a parallel term or may call up some contrast with his word "synagogue."³⁸

stood up for to read: Among ancient writers, Luke is the first to note the custom of standing to read the scripture text during a synagogue service and then sitting to comment on it (see the Note on 4:20).³⁹ Such a practice points to an early shared sense of meaningful actions in synagogue worship: one elevates scripture to read from it because of its spiritual loftiness, and one sits to comment on it because a person's views about it stand lower than its divine dignity. Augmenting this physical elevation of scripture is the archaeological evidence that a reader moves to the center of the room

36. Schürer, *History*, 2:333–34, 417–21, 424–27.

37. Schürer, *History*, 2:425–27; for a more cautious approach, see Eric M. Meyers, "Synagogue," in *ABD*, 6:251–55; Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 45–70.

38. William J. Adams Jr., "Synagogues in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 4–13.

39. Marshall, *Luke*, 181; compare *Mishnah Yoma* 7:1 and *Sotah* 7:7.

and steps up onto a platform to read.⁴⁰ The question arises whether a regular reading of scripture is already in place in Jesus' day, as is apparent in a later era, and therefore we might come to know the time of year that Jesus visits Nazareth. Unfortunately, the evidence for such a lectionary cycle is lacking although archaeological evidence from later synagogues indicate places of reading the Torah (but see Acts 13:15; 15:21).⁴¹

4:17 *there was delivered unto him:* This line discloses another action from synagogue worship of Jesus' day—the minister's assignment to carry the roll of scripture to the one who will read it, a roll that is kept elsewhere and is brought to the synagogue on the Sabbath (see 4:20).⁴² The reader, a member of the congregation, is not to remove the scriptural text from its place of honor; that task belongs to the minister.

the prophet Esaias: According to the Mishnah that is compiled almost two centuries later, the synagogue service consists of several parts.⁴³ From this and other sources, we learn that, besides prayers, blessings, and a reading from the books of the Law, someone in the congregation reads from one of the prophetic books.⁴⁴ In this case, the Savior is to read from Isaiah. Because evidence for a set synagogue reading schedule in this era is absent, either Jesus knows that the attendant will bring the book of Isaiah to him, or Jesus arranges beforehand with the president of the synagogue to receive this particular prophetic work.

opened the book: We should not think of a book or codex in the modern sense. Jesus unrolls a scroll. The term translated "opened" (Greek *anaptussō*) in this verse means to unfold or unroll.⁴⁵

he found the place: Although the recitation is to be from the book of Isaiah, we do not know whether the attendant has already rolled the scroll to the proper passage for reading. It appears that, by his own volition, Jesus goes directly to Isaiah 61:1–2 for his reading (see also Isa. 58:6).

4:18 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:* With this line, Jesus' public ministry begins. He holds up to view the motivating, authorizing force that moves his actions and words, the Spirit of the Lord. Herein lies his power,

40. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 93–94.

41. Leon Morris, *The New Testament and the Jewish Lectionaries* (London: Tyndale Press, 1964), 11–34, especially 21–22 on Luke 4:16–30; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 343–47.

42. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 75, 237.

43. *Mishnah Megillah* 4:1–6; compare *Yoma* 7:1 and *Sotah* 7:7.

44. Schürer, *History*, 2:447–54; Marshall, *Luke*, 181–82; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:531–32; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 153–55.

45. BAGD, 59.

and his authority, received dramatically at the moment of baptism (see the Note on 3:22). Effectively, after carrying the Lord’s Spirit privately, and being led by it (see 4:1, 14), he brings its guiding and quickening presence into the midst of his people, his neighbors. Beginning with this line, the quotation comes from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 61:1–2, with a few minor variations, probably because Luke is quoting from memory.⁴⁶ The language of Isaiah’s passage leads a person to think of Psalm 72:1–19 where, in similar terms, we read of the activities and characteristics of kings and thus of the Messiah.

he hath anointed me: The Greek verb *chriō* is in the aorist or simple past tense and points to the Savior’s one-time anointing or ordination (see Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1; and the Note on 3:22). In this case, Luke 10:22, John 3:35 and D&C 93:4 signal that Jesus receives his authorization directly from his Father. Hence, he receives authority from his Father; he does not possess it independently. We compare the words indicating his commission, “therefore am I sent” (4:43; see the Note on 3:2 and the Analysis on 3:21–22).⁴⁷

to preach the gospel to the poor: This aspect of Jesus’ ministry, at least partially fulfilled, serves as proof to the two disciples from the Baptist that Jesus is who John believes him to be (see 7:22). Notably, “the poor” are the inheritors of “the kingdom of God” (6:20). In this latter sense, “the poor” may form an early designation for Jesus’ followers.⁴⁸

he hath sent me: This language (Greek verb *apostellō*), in the aorist or simple past tense, also points to an act of formal commissioning, as it does for Moses (see Ex. 3:10, 12; the Notes on 3:2 and 9:2).⁴⁹ The associated noun (Greek *apostolos*) comes into English as the title “apostle.”⁵⁰ In the Septuagint reading of Isaiah 61:1, this expression “he hath sent me” governs the phrase “to preach the gospel to the poor” as well as the infinitive clauses that follow.

46. Plummer, *Luke*, 120.

47. *TDNT*, 2:171, 348; 5:452–53, 895; Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 9; Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:132–33; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 246 (“receiving the fulness of the priesthood”); JST Luke 9:25 (“whom God hath ordained”); John 17:2, 7, 18; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:2, 9 (quoting Ps. 45:7); 3:2; 5:10 (compare 7:21; 8:3); 1 Pet. 1:2, 20; Ether 3:14; D&C 93:16–17; *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1.45.5; compare also 1 Cor. 2:6–7.

48. Gaye Strathearn, “4Q521 and What It Might Mean for Q 3–7,” in Skinner, Davis, and Griffin, *Bountiful Harvest*, 406–8.

49. Plummer, *Luke*, 121.

50. BAGD, 98, 99; *TLNT*, 1:186–94.

to heal the brokenhearted: This clause stands in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 61:1. It appears in some important Greek manuscripts of Luke’s Gospel but is lacking in others. Even so, Luke’s original account may well have included the clause because it forms a natural connection to Jesus’ subsequent words about a physician (see 4:23).⁵¹

deliverance to the captives: In the usual vocabulary of the New Testament, the noun rendered “deliverance” (Greek *aphesis*) usually means forgiveness (see 1:77; 3:3; 24:47). This sense lies just beneath this expression⁵² and, logically, embraces the forgiveness offered to departed spirits who will repent (see 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 4:6; Moses 7:39; D&C 138:31–33, 57–59).

deliverance . . . captives . . . set at liberty: This sort of language points to formal acts of granting individuals their freedom from bondage or slavery, either by force or by agreement.⁵³ See the expressions “men are free” and “ye are made free” in the context of the Atonement (2 Ne. 2:27; Mosiah 5:8; D&C 128:22; also Ps. 146:7; Isa. 42:7; Jacob 2:19). Moreover, within the broader reaches of the Atonement, such language has to do with Jesus freeing those held captive in the darkness of the spirit world by descending into that world (see Matt. 12:40; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:9; 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 4:6; Rev. 1:18; 2 Ne. 9:10, 12–13, 19, 26; D&C 88:99; 138:18, 30–31; the Notes on 1:79; 5:4; 6:49; 11:21–22; 24:21; the Analysis on 11:14–28).⁵⁴ Remarkably, the prophet Isaiah, who originally pens the lines that Jesus quotes, is present when the Savior comes to the spirit world to inaugurate the mission to recover souls (see D&C 138:42). Notably, this event does not go unnoticed by early Christian authors such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and Origen.⁵⁵ Moreover, early Christian

51. Marshall, *Luke*, 182.

52. BAGD, 124; *TDNT*, 1:511.

53. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:532.

54. *TDNT*, 2:424; 6:577–78. Compare “We’ll Sing All Hail to Jesus’ Name,” verse 3, “He [Jesus] seized the keys of death and hell / And bruised the serpent’s head; / He bid the prison doors unfold, / The grave yield up her dead.”

55. Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 9:2 (in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, 10 vols. [rpt.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950], 1:62 [hereafter cited as *ANF*]); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 72 (*ANF*, 1:234–35); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.27.2; 4.33.1, 12; 5:31.1 (*ANF*, 1:499, 506, 510, 560); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2:9; 6:6 (*ANF*, 2:357, 490 [according to the former, the Apostles preach to the spirits in prison]); Hippolytus, *Commentary on Luke Chapter 23* (*ANF*, 5:194); *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 26, 45 (*ANF*, 5:209, 213 [according to the latter, and the *Gospel of Nicodemus* 18–19, John the Baptist precedes the Savior into the world of spirits and prepares for his arrival]); Origen, *On First Principles* 2.5.3 (*ANF*, 4:279–80).

works such as the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Gospel of Peter*, and the *Gospel of Nicodemus* also show clear acquaintance with Jesus' rescue of the departed spirits while his body lies in the tomb.⁵⁶

recovering of sight to the blind: The prophecy within these words will soon find fulfillment in Jesus' ministry (see 7:21–22; 18:35–43; compare Mosiah 3:5). Because no instances of healing a blind person are known from ancient Israel's past, people in the Nazareth congregation may well understand Jesus' words to be metaphorical or spiritual, as in earlier Old Testament passages (see Ps. 146:8; Isa. 29:18; 42:7, 16, 18).

to set at liberty them that are bruised: The literal meaning is “to send forth the broken into freedom.” This line does not come from Isaiah 61 but from Isaiah 58:6. Commentators ask whether, for this quotation, the Savior rolls the scroll back to the earlier passage. In light of the discussion above about his willingness in other instances to quote and adjust a passage of scripture (see the Analysis on 4:1–13), he may simply be adding the line from memory as one that points to the merciful, embracing reach of his impending ministry.

4:19 To preach: The Hebrew verb in Isaiah 61:2 (Hebrew *qara'*) and the Greek verb in LXX Isaiah 61:2 (Greek *kaleō*) carry the sense “to summon, to call,” and hold up the Messiah-king's potent ability to summon into existence the acceptable year of the Lord.⁵⁷ Here Jesus' words point to a humble announcement, which is a softer concept.

the acceptable year of the Lord: The term rendered “acceptable” (Greek *dektos*) has to do with what is acceptable to humans and anticipates the same term a few verses later that is rendered “accepted” (4:24).⁵⁸ The word “year” has drawn several interpretations to itself. Some commentators have seen it pointing back to the recent Jubilee year (AD 26–27) wherein, as everyone in the synagogue will remember, those in bondage for a debt are set free, and lands that have passed to others for a similar reason are restored to their original owners (see Lev. 25).⁵⁹ A second meaning draws on the broader context of Isaiah 61 that treats the redemption and exaltation of Zion (see Isa. 60–62). In this sense, the term “year” frames the era of Zion's divinely arranged redemption and prosperity (see D&C 93:51 and “the year of my

56. *Odes of Solomon* 42:11–20; *Gospel of Peter* 41–42 (ANF, 10:27); *Gospel of Nicodemus* 17–27 (NTA, 1:470–481).

57. BAGD, 399–400; TDNT, 3:487–91; TDOT, 13:118, 121–22.

58. BAGD, 173.

59. Marshall, *Luke*, 184; Christopher J. H. Wright, “Jubilee, Year of,” in *ABD*, 3:1025–29.

redeemed” in D&C 133:52). Both of these senses appear in the Melchizedek Midrash of the Dead Sea Scrolls as applying to those who not only are worthy of the blessings of Melchizedek but also stand within the circle of his priesthood.⁶⁰ A third meaning that appears in modern scripture binds a slightly different expression, “the acceptable day of the Lord,” to Jesus’ redeeming act, particularly as it is proclaimed among the dead (D&C 138:31).

4:20 sat down: Jesus’ act illumines the custom of a person standing to read scripture—chiefly because the reader’s hands hold the scripture at an elevated spot and the reader’s feet rest on a small platform⁶¹—and then sitting to comment on it because the person commenting is seated lower than where the scripture is held for reading (see the Note on 4:16). This activity of standing, reading, sitting, and commenting is the prerogative of men in Jesus’ society because women, for the most part, are not taught to read and write.⁶² Another element appears in Jesus’ act of sitting, though not in a strong manner. The act of sitting, as often portrayed in scripture, has to do with the seating of a king or of God, whether at his enthronement or for a special occasion (see 2 Sam. 7:1; 1 Kgs. 2:19; Ps. 9:4; 99:1; Isa. 6:1; 37:16).⁶³

the eyes of all: The excavated remnants of first century synagogues at Gamla in Galilee, at the Herodium in Judea, and at Masada show the design of a large room wherein people sit around the sides on elevated masonry seats, all facing the center. Thus, the center of the room is open except for pillars that support the roof. Assuming this arrangement in Nazareth, everyone in the synagogue can look more or less directly at Jesus wherever he is seated (see the Note on 4:35).⁶⁴

were fastened on him: The verb (Greek *atenizō*) captures the intense curiosity of members in the congregation:⁶⁵ they have already heard stories of marvels performed by Jesus in the town of Capernaum (see 4:23). It seems evident that citizens of Nazareth have never known him to undertake such actions.

60. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:533; García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 139–40.

61. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 93–94.

62. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 363, 373; André Lemaire, “Education: Ancient Israel,” in *ABD*, 2:305–12; John T. Townsend, “Education: Greco-Roman Period,” in *ABD*, 2:312–17.

63. Mitchell Dahood, *The Psalms I, 1–50*, vol. 16 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 8–9.

64. Schürer, *History*, 2:441–43; Meyers, “Synagogue,” 6:253–55; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 185–86, 337–41.

65. BAGD, 119.

4:21 *he began to say:* Jesus' comment, following his reading, constitutes an interpretation of the scriptural passage, known as a *targum*, which may also refer to a translation of a scriptural text. Examples of written targums have survived and cover a broad range of scriptural translation and interpretation. Such interpretive efforts arise from the fact that, following the exile in Babylon, people of the land mostly speak Aramaic but their scripture is written in Hebrew, and they need help in understanding what the scripture text says and means. The earliest glimpse of an oral targum arises in Ezra's efforts to read and interpret scripture (see Neh. 8:1–8).⁶⁶

This day is this scripture fulfilled: Here stands the grand announcement of who Jesus really is. To be sure, readers of Luke's earlier stories will already know who Jesus is. But the Savior's first public declaration occurs in his hometown among people who know him and his family. On the significance of "this day," see the Note on 19:9.

4:22 *all bear him witness:* As they begin to converse—this is the imperfect tense of the Greek verb *martyreō*⁶⁷—congregation members show themselves to be favorable witnesses of Jesus' first declaration about himself and, in this instance, stand as first-rank observers of his announced messianic mission and character. Jesus' messiahship, as he spells it out by quoting lines from Isaiah in 4:18–19, differs from views held in his society about the expected Messiah (see the Notes on 3:5, 15; 20:41–42, 44; 22:32).⁶⁸ But unlike his disciples, whom he will gather around him later, they reject his witness of himself (see the Notes on 22:67, 70–71 and the Analysis on 22:63–71; compare John 8:13–18).

wondered: As in the other accounts of Jesus' return to Nazareth, his hearers' response is astonishment and wonder; they have never heard Jesus, or anyone else, speak such marvelous words (see Matt. 13:54; Mark 6:2). This scene, therefore, marks a turn for those who knew him as a youth. He changes his tone and demeanor when he begins his ministry, something that only those who know him will notice (see the Note on 10:42). This observation underscores the authenticity of this scene in the synagogue.

66. Schürer, *History*, 2:448, 452–53; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 241–42; Philip S. Alexander, "Targum, Targumim," in *ABD*, 6:320–31; compare Ezra 4:18, "The letter . . . has been read and translated" (NIV).

67. BAGD, 493–94; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1900.

68. Brown and Holzapfel, *Lost 500 Years*, 145–51.

the gracious words: The expression literally reads “the words of grace” and connects to other passages that speak of “graciousness” and “favor” (see the Note on 1:28).

Is this not Joseph’s son?: Evidently, Jesus’ true origins have remained a family secret, for people of Nazareth think of Joseph as Jesus’ biological father. In another account, Jesus is called “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55). Most intriguing is Mark’s terminology, “the son of Mary,” hinting that Joseph is already dead and that Mary’s reputation has grown to such a height that her son is called after her (Mark 6:3).⁶⁹

4:23 *Ye will surely say:* Beginning with this verse, and continuing through verse 27, Jesus speaks his first provocative words. Further reading leads to the observation that he purposely pushes his listeners—often they see and hear him only once—to make a decision to receive him or to reject him, even becoming “filled with wrath” (4:28). This scene in Nazareth is followed closely by another in Capernaum—it is Mark who supplies this geographical detail (see Mark 2:1)—wherein Jesus again speaks provocatively, eliciting a negative response from certain persons in the crowd (see Luke 5:18–26). One difference in these two scenes is that in the first, Jesus has come alone to his hometown, whereas in the second he is accompanied by his chosen witnesses who will behold the responses of people in the crowd. The evident purpose of Jesus’ provocations comes into clear view in a third instance, that of Jesus’ healing the man with the withered right hand (see 6:6–11). This last report has to do with Jesus cajoling his opponents into the light so that “they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22; see further the introduction to Luke 6 and the Note on 6:7).

proverb: In this context, the term “proverb” (Greek *parabolē*) refers to a short illustration or saying. In most passages, it has to do with an extended story based on a comparison that both reveals and conceals (see the Notes on 5:36 and 8:4).⁷⁰

Physician, heal thyself: The source of this saying remains unknown, although scholars have identified similar sayings in ancient literatures.⁷¹ The meaning is more difficult to ascertain. If this saying is intended to echo the line “to heal the brokenhearted” (4:18; Isa. 61:1), then the sense may enwrap chiefly the healing of others. But the singular pronoun “thyself”

69. Brown, *Mary and Elisabeth*, 73–74.

70. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 295–99; Plummer, *Luke*, 125–26; Dodd, *Parables*, 13–28; *TDOT*, 9:64–67; *TDNT*, 5:744–61.

71. Plummer, *Luke*, 126; Marshall, *Luke*, 187.

resists this understanding. A more attractive possibility may reside in the sense of, “Establish the proofs of your own claims” or “Show yourself really to be the person we hear about.” In this view, Jesus intimates a fundamental disbelief gnawing at his audience, a trait that the other Gospel writers impute explicitly to the citizens of Nazareth (see the telling term “unbelief” in Matt. 13:58 and Mark 6:6).⁷²

whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum: Verses 4:14–15 inform us that Jesus is active previously in Galilean towns. And from Jesus’ recitation of his hearers’ thoughts in this passage, Capernaum is reckoned among them. With this in mind, we might view some of the miracles touched on briefly at the end of chapter 4, all evidently performed in Capernaum, as fitting naturally into the earlier preaching tour to which this verse alludes (see 4:40–41).

4:24 *Verily I say:* People customarily utter the first word (Hebrew *amēn*) in agreement with what has been said in prayer or praise of the Lord, binding themselves to the sentiments expressed in the prayer or words of praise. Here the Savior speaks the word *amēn* at the beginning of his prophecy, not at its end, and thus shows its binding nature. By uttering this combination of words in contrast to what those in the synagogue will say to him, “Ye will surely say unto me” (4:23), he underscores the bedrock trustworthiness of his declaration (see also 12:37; 13:35; 18:17, 29–30; 21:32).⁷³

No prophet is accepted in his own country: This declaration anticipates Jesus’ citation of the stories of Elijah and Elisha whose remarkable healing powers are manifest among Gentiles, not Israelites (see 4:25–27). Matthew and Mark quote a slightly longer version of this statement, both repeated in Nazareth (see Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4).

4:25 *Elias:* In this passage, the named person is Elijah. The spelling “Elias” comes about because Greek, as a spoken tongue, does not pronounce the soft “h” sound either within or at the end of a word. Instead, Greek speakers substitute “s” at the end of a word.⁷⁴

when the heaven was shut up: Jesus’ summary refers to God’s sealing of the heaven, as the passive indicates, and Elijah’s subsequent retreat to the village of Zarephath (see 1 Kgs. 17). More than this, behind this passage

72. Plummer, *Luke*, 126; Morris, *Luke*, 117–18.

73. *TDNT*, 1:337–38; Johnson, *Luke*, 80.

74. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §38.

stands the concept of divine keys that open and close the heavens (see 11:52; the Notes on 13:25; 24:31–32, 45).⁷⁵

three years and six months: This period for the famine is mirrored in James 5:17. But the length here exceeds “the third year” when Elijah unseals the heavens at the end of his famous contest with the priests of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:1). Scholars offer various explanations, including (1) that the third year ties to the time that Elijah is residing in Zarephath, (2) that the strength of the drought continues into the fourth year, as hinted in “three years and six months,” or (3) that Jesus draws on another source for this information.⁷⁶

4:26 sent: This verb (Greek *pempō*) does not usually denote special action as in the case of the verb “to send forth” on an official assignment (Greek *apostellō*).⁷⁷ The meaning, therefore, may simply have to do with God sending Elijah to a place where he can survive the famine, with the remarkable consequence of Elijah preserving the lives of a widow and her son.

a woman that was a widow: The Savior draws attention to the difficult social situation of this woman. Mentioning her circumstance will bring to the minds of his hearers both the frightful prospect of deadly hunger that she faces when Elijah arrives in her village—the famine reaches that far north, beyond Galilee—as well as the serious illness that comes upon her only child, an illness that Elijah heals (see 1 Kgs. 17:10–23).

4:27 Eliseus: This name is Elisha. The variant spelling arises partly because Greek does not possess the sibilant sound “sh.”⁷⁸ Jesus is referring to the intriguing story recorded in 2 Kings 5.

4:28 all they in the synagogue: Two elements arise. First, all present witness Jesus’ words about himself, becoming the first to hear his message about his messiahship (see the Note on 4:22). Second, it is safe to assume that not all congregants are initially “filled with wrath” but are in shock as the meaning of Jesus’ words dawns on them. Even so, as others’ anger grows to a deadly crescendo, all in the crowd allow themselves to be swept up in a shared fury so that they are willing to seek the death of a man who, from Luke’s hints, has grown up in a normal way among them (see the Notes on 4:16, 22).

filled with wrath: The turn from polite expectation (see 4:22) to consuming rage apparently occurs in an instant. Another example of such anger following the servants of God comes clear in the similar expression in Acts 19:28.

75. *TDNT*, 3:745.

76. Morris, *Luke*, 118.

77. BAGD, 647–48; *TDNT*, 1:404

78. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §38.

4:29 thrust him out of the city: According to Leviticus 24:14, Numbers 15:35–36, and 1 Kings 21:13, those intending to execute a person for a crime are to take the accused outside of the settlement.

the brow of the hill whereon their city was built: As in antiquity, Nazareth is situated in an elevated, natural bowl. Thus, the location of the brow of the hill is problematic. Cliffs overhang the town on the north edge, but the more natural “brow” lies to the southeast, approximately a mile from the middle of the old town. Here the slope of the hill down to the plain is steep enough that, if a person is shoved, he or she will sustain severe injuries, perhaps even death. To reach this “brow,” Jesus’ intended executioners have to travel more than a Sabbath day’s journey, a point of irony.

4:30 passing through the midst: We naturally wonder how Jesus extracts himself from the hostile crowd. Implicit in the account, it seems, is the notion that Jesus possesses unusual power that allows him to slip away (see John 8:59), much the same as the power that lies behind the account of Jesus cleansing the temple at Passover time when, as we know from Josephus, soldiers are stationed atop the portico roofs that surround the temple grounds, but do not interfere with his agitating actions (see 19:46; John 10:39).⁷⁹

he . . . went his way: According to Luke’s account, Jesus departs from Nazareth, his hometown, never to return. Instead, he withdraws to Capernaum (see 4:31) and effectively sets up his headquarters there on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. In the reports of Matthew and Mark, Jesus’ visit to “his own country” ends because he finds only “unbelief” in his hometown, rather than hostility (see Matt. 13:53–58; Mark 6:1–6). In John’s Gospel, in a later scene that might occur in Nazareth, John only mentions Jesus interacting with his brothers in “Galilee” (see John 7:1–9). Hence, even John’s account does not insist that Jesus returns to Nazareth after the raucous Sabbath in the synagogue.

Analysis

The Savior’s visit to Nazareth stands as the radiant centerpiece of Luke’s Gospel. This visit displays all the important strands of Jesus’ ministry, highlighting the grand tapestry of his teachings and miracles, his life and redeeming death. In the first place, he comes to Nazareth to undrape his messiahship and chooses the synagogue to do so, the one place in the town

79. Josephus, *B.J.* 2.12.1 (§224).

where, within a few moments, he turns acquaintances into witnesses. Jesus' chosen pattern of teaching in synagogues where he can reach many is one essential thread which will become visible again and again in Luke's report.

Further, in Nazareth Jesus puts his stamp on the character of his ministry.⁸⁰ Only days before, he withstands the temptations to aggrandize himself by performing a miracle and to draw followers by a dazzling public display. In Nazareth he faces the very same temptations, this time to satisfy the expectations of friends, people whom he loves and who will surely support his ambitions. Instead, he demonstrates that his powers are not for mere display, but that his earnest exertions will be to deliver "the poor" and "the brokenhearted" and "the captives" (4:18). His ministry will be to those in need of his aid, and who will accept it. To be sure, he will offer the "recovering of sight to the blind," which on one level means drawing on his miraculous powers. But such acts will answer to a searching person's need for spiritual sight, as a blind person seeks and needs light and sight.

In addition to the Savior's announcement about his authority, he weaves a subtle but direct reference about his powers into his remarks. For he cites the biblical stories of Elijah's nourishing stay with the widow of Sarepta during a famine and Elisha's healing of Naaman the Syrian leper (see 1 Kgs. 17:8–16; 2 Kgs. 5:1–14). The congregation, of course, reacts negatively to these references because they highlight Gentiles. But Jesus is appealing to more than Gentiles who receive heavenly blessings. He is lifting up a clear reference to divine powers that he will match during his unfolding ministry, powers that will preserve and enrich people's lives. The first manifestation will occur a week or so later in the Capernaum synagogue, but the announcement rings through the Nazareth synagogue at the very moment that he frames the proclamation of his authority. He now fully engages the devil's earlier challenge about his authority.

The Savior's featuring of the widow in Serepta emphasizes his compassionate intentions. Drawing attention to her and to her situation is plainly intentional, carrying a subtle message that, on a spiritual level, he has come to deliver individuals from death-dealing hunger and illness, to heal people from spiritual lack. More openly, Jesus ties himself to the enormous powers

80. See Robert L. Brawley, *Luke–Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 6–27; and Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:526–27, 529; who both ascribe this element to Luke's creative work alone (but see the Note on 4:22). Brawley argues against the view that Luke 4:16–30 consists of Luke's effort to set out the broad agenda for Luke–Acts of rejection by Jews and embracing by Gentiles.

that Elijah exhibited, though he holds them back in Nazareth. In addition, as in the case of most widows, the woman of Serepta is little noticed inside the larger society, except for her presence in this story. By pointing to her, Jesus pushes forward the message that he has come to meet the needs of the little-noticed, the vulnerable.

In this connection, the Savior's powers emerge into the full light of day, but not in a form that we might anticipate. As we have seen, it is plain that people in Nazareth expect Jesus to perform a miracle as he has elsewhere. His refusal only heightens the drama of what finally happens—the expected miracle occurs in a way that the angry crowd cannot see—right in front of their dimming eyes. As they furiously seek his death and roughly lead him to “the brow of the hill,” he turns and passes “through the midst of them [and] went his way” (4:29–30). That he escapes is astonishing. That he calls on his powers to rescue, in this case to rescue himself, is plainly evident from the account, though Luke does not report it as a miracle. Yet a miracle occurs within plain sight of the townspeople, one that they will refuse to recognize because of their newly aroused ire.

The crowd's stormy response to the Savior elucidates another irrepressible theme that pushes through Luke's narrative—rejection. This response affects mostly the disciples, for we behold some of the intensifying exasperation that builds within the circle of the Twelve when, after villagers in Samaria refuse them customary hospitality, “James and John . . . said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?” Gratefully, Jesus is in control of his emotions and, after rebuking the two brothers, declares that “the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them” (9:54, 56).

With rejection, death also raises its frightful countenance as a major theme to be fulfilled at the end of the Gospel. Although Jesus does not die at the brow of the hill as a result of the congregants' actions, it is their intent to kill or seriously injure him, as opponents will succeed in doing at Jerusalem. His death becomes more explicit when he, in transfigured form, speaks with Moses and Elijah “of his decease” and when Jesus draws the Twelve to himself and intones, “we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished” (9:31; 18:31).

By quoting the passages from Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6 in the synagogue, the Savior announces other aspects of his ministry. First, he understands that Isaiah sees and prophesies of these days, a notion that appears in other scripture (see 2 Ne. 11:1–2; 3 Ne. 23:1–3). Hence, he grounds his own work

in Israel's past. Prophets and others who look forward to the days of the Messiah are looking forward to this moment, and Jesus stands as its fulfillment. Second, for those who see Jesus' ministry extending beyond the grave, the words of Isaiah point directly to his eventual ministry to "the captives," to "the spirits in prison" (Isa. 61:1; 1 Pet. 3:19; see D&C 138:42). Here, he will "heal" and "set at liberty" those who "sometime were disobedient" (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; 1 Pet. 3:20; also D&C 138:18, 31). Perhaps surprisingly, this passage is one of the only firm allusions in the four Gospels to Jesus' ministry among the departed dead except, the first of which are lines from Zacharias's prophecy, "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death" (1:79; see the Notes thereon and on 11:21–22; D&C 138:30; also Isa. 9:2). Third, because Jesus brings the "Spirit of the Lord," a prominent grace in the best eras of his people's past, he is reintroducing the spiritual strength and divine enrichment of distant days when the heavens opened and blessings showered onto God's people. For those attuned to their people's past, the present moment brims with providential promise.

Other pieces adhere to Jesus' quotation of these Old Testament passages. Two other texts speak in similar terms, filling in the portrait of the Messiah's graciousness and unmatched gifts. Because of their allied themes, they mesh with Jesus' quotation. Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying to the Messiah-king that he is to "open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isa. 42:7). Elsewhere, the psalmist sings, "The Lord looseth the prisoners: The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down" (Ps. 146:7–8). These lines, as those which Jesus quotes, strike the majestic chords that are to herald the work of the Coming One, filling the air with the music of divine deliverance. Beyond this, these passages from Isaiah and Psalm 146, because of their contexts, also tie God's rescuing efforts to his acts of unmatched creation: "God the Lord . . . created the heavens, and stretched them out; . . . he giveth breath unto the people" and "the Lord . . . made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is" (Isa. 42:5; Ps. 146:5–6). The one who creates offers deliverance, the one who inaugurates life provides a rescue from its difficulties, the one who thus opens human opportunities helps to bring about their success. There is more.

Isaiah writes in adjacent lines that billow with optimism that he will "give [the Messiah-king] for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6). These words add implicit, textured substance to Jesus' words about preaching "the gospel to the poor" and setting "at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). For his gospel embodies covenant and his

words are for all, Jew and Gentile alike (see 2:32). His teaching will eventually begin to reach into the recesses of the gentile world, first in his incursion into gentile territory on the east side of the Sea of Galilee and then in the efforts of the seventy disciples (see 8:26–40; 10:1–20). This promise of eternal blessings to Gentiles, of course, rests comfortably within his references to the stories of Elijah and Elisha and their interaction with non-Israelites (see 4:25–27).

The Savior’s citation of lines from Isaiah 61 highlights a further compelling link, this one bonding to Melchizedek. One of the fragmentary texts that have come out of Cave XI at Qumran—now titled *Melchizedek Midrash*—consists of a commentary on a series of Old Testament passages which envision Melchizedek and those of his “lot” fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah embedded within Isaiah 61:1–3. That is, Melchizedek will “proclaim liberty to the captives,” meaning that he will “free them from [the debt] of all their iniquities.” Moreover, he will be the messenger of God who comes to “comfort the afflicted” by instructing them “in all the ages of the wo[rld].”⁸¹ Plainly, in the view of the people of Qumran at the Dead Sea, one of the “lot” of Melchizedek, who bears his priesthood, is to fulfill the expectations envisioned in Isaiah 61. Whether Jesus is aware of the thinking that comes to be embedded in this document is unknown. But by quoting lines from this chapter, he shows that he stands within a shared stream of Jewish expectations about a Messiah who is tied to Melchizedek and his lofty priesthood.

To take this observation one step further, when Jesus announces who he is by declaring “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (4:21), he brings the entire focus of his people’s expressed and unexpressed expectations directly onto himself. He is the expected one who will bring promised relief, who will offer sweet freedom, who will give reassuring comfort. In light of the words of the *Melchizedek Midrash*, he also fulfills the expectation that this person will come as a Melchizedek who is both “king of Salem,” that is, king of peace, and is “the priest of the most high God” (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1). In a word, the Savior comes as both king and priest, the righteous ruler, when fulfilling Isaiah 61.

We must also deal here with the reports in Matthew 13 and Mark 6 about Jesus’ visit to “his own country.” Are these stories merely variants of Luke’s account of Jesus in Nazareth? Apparently not. Too many details differ when moving from one report to another. Although one may argue that

81. García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 139–40; also Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:530, 532.

Luke has taken a known story and reshaped it into the launch pad of his record,⁸² this view need not be the case. To be sure, common elements appear, say, between Mark 6 and Luke 4, including the visit to the local synagogue, the negative reaction of the congregants, the proverb about not honoring a prophet, the mention of his family, and the lack of a miracle. We have already seen that a miracle occurs, though Luke does not label it as such. Besides, Mark does report miracles, though no major acts in Jesus' country, "no mighty work" (Mark 6:5). Further, that Jesus goes to the local synagogue fits his normal pattern of meeting as many people as he can; that people react negatively matches a pattern plainly visible throughout Jesus' ministry; and that people say something about his family during different visits is not surprising because, as is often the case, the congregation gathered differs from Sabbath to Sabbath. These observations leave only the proverb of the dishonored prophet as a tantalizing link hanging between the stories. But this single similarity does not constitute a decisive basis for saying that Luke's story frames a mere adaptation of Mark's.

Rather, we can more readily see Luke recording a story that stands independent of the other accounts in Mark 6 and Matthew 13. The two most compelling elements have to do with the absence of disciples and the reason for Jesus' departure in Luke's version. The first feature, the presence of disciples in Mark's report, stands out even more when we see that Jesus' visit to "his own country" with disciples immediately precedes his sending out the Twelve on their first mission (see Mark 6:7–13). Plainly, for Mark, the presence of disciples forms an integral element in his story, not incidental, because of the following commissioning of the Twelve. Second, Mark strongly hints that Jesus comes seeking to bless lives through miracles rather than refusing as in Luke's rehearsal. For, in his words, Jesus "could there do no mighty work . . . because of their unbelief," although "he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark 6:5–6). The texture of miracles folded into these lines differs decisively from that in Luke's record which does not intimate any intent by Jesus to perform such acts. In this connection, moreover, the debilitating but quiescent "unbelief" in townspeople of Mark's report differs wholly from the complete fury that engulfs them in Luke's (see the Introduction III.G).

The argument that Luke's report shows unevenness of language in its retelling and thus indicates that he is conflating Mark's story with other

82. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:71, 526–29; Morris, *Luke*, 115; Johnson, *Luke*, 80–81.

information remains largely subjective and therefore without compelling merit.⁸³ Instead, Luke apparently does not know the other account and has repeated a story that comes to him independently of those in Matthew and Mark.

HEALING IN THE CAPERNAUM SYNAGOGUE (4:31–37) (Compare Mark 1:21–28)

King James Translation

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

New Rendition

31 And he went down into Capernaum, a town of Galilee. And he taught them on the Sabbath. 32 And they were astonished by his teaching, because his word was with authority.

33 And there was a man in the synagogue who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried with a loud voice, 34 “Leave us alone! What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: The Holy One of God.” 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him.” And although the demon threw him into the middle, he went out of him without harming him.

36 And fear came upon all of them, and they began to discuss with one another, saying “What [kind of] command is this? For he commands unclean spirits with authority and power, and they leave.” 37 And news concerning him went out to every place in the surrounding region.

83. For this view, for instance, Bultmann, *History*, 31–32; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:526–27.

Notes

4:31 came down to Capernaum: Capernaum now becomes the central town of Jesus' early ministry. Because Jesus visits the town earlier, we ask, Why does Luke wait until this point to introduce Jesus' activities in this place (see 4:23; also 4:14–15)? Adding more intrigue, Luke does not say here that Jesus *returns* to Capernaum, a notion that he pens in 4:1 and 4:14 about other locales. For his own reasons, apparently, Luke does not narrate the earlier visit to that city, possibly because he intends to feature Jesus' trip to Nazareth as the platform of his ministry. There is a second matter. We note that Jesus goes “down” to Capernaum. To be sure, Nazareth lies in the hills of upper Galilee about 1,200 feet above sea level, and from there one descends to the north shore of the Sea of Galilee to reach Capernaum at 680 feet below sea level.⁸⁴ But the language of ascending and descending is usually reserved for Jerusalem.⁸⁵ In this light, can we suggest that in this passage Capernaum qualifies, even if only temporarily, as the city of the great king, who is Jesus, effectively replacing Jerusalem (see 1:32–33; 19:38; Matt. 5:35)? Moreover, Luke's note about the descent to Capernaum indicates that he has a basic acquaintance with the geography of Galilee and likely visits both Nazareth and Capernaum, passing from one to the other through the Arbel Pass (see the Note on 6:17; the Introduction V.C).

taught them on the sabbath days: Though Luke often writes the plural “sabbath days” with the meaning of a single day,⁸⁶ it seems reasonable that Jesus teaches through a sequence of Sabbaths in his headquarters town.

4:32 they were astonished: Some call this response to Jesus' teaching “the shared recollections of a group,” effectively making those in the synagogue eyewitnesses whose report later becomes part of the story of Jesus' ministry (see 4:36; 5:26; the Note on 4:14).⁸⁷

with power: The phrase can be translated “with authority” (Greek *en exousia*). The term for “authority” points back to the same word that appears in 4:6 on the lips of the devil, “all this power,” and brings the issue

84. Eric F. F. Bishop, “Jesus and the Lake,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13 (1951): 398, says the median level is 682 feet below the Mediterranean Sea.

85. Luke 18:31; 19:28; Acts 21:12, 15; also 1 Ne. 3:9–10, 22–23; 4:1–2, 4, 34–35; 7:2–5; an exception is Luke 2:4.

86. Marshall, *Luke*, 191.

87. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 93–132, 146–49, 313–14.

of power and authority closer to full resolution which will occur in the next few verses.

4:33 in the synagogue: Only one synagogue is known from Capernaum in the first century AD, and the basalt foundation stones that support the remains of the fourth or fifth century structure still exist (see 7:5).⁸⁸

unclean devil: The term is properly “unclean demon,” pointing to an influencing agent outside the person.⁸⁹ Prophecy envisions the Savior encountering this sort of individual (see Mosiah 3:6). One wonders how this scene is to be understood. The Greek term “unclean” (Greek *akathartos*) has to do with physical, ritual, and moral impurity.⁹⁰ In this verse it points to the ritual uncleanness of the man. Hence, it is evident that people of Jesus’ day accept, even welcome into synagogue worship services those whom they think are possessed, even though such persons can transmit a state of uncleanness to others by touching them, as Luke’s term “unclean” indicates. That the congregants allow the man to join worship services discloses a most generous attitude on their part and a view that his presence does not compromise the sacred space of the synagogue.

4:34 what have we to do with thee: The idiom is the same as in John 2:4, meaning literally, “What to us and to you?” The sense seems to be “What is there between us and you?” The pronoun *us* implies that the demon sees itself as representing others of its kind.

I know thee who thou art: The demon’s knowledge of who Jesus really is contrasts sharply with the inability or unwillingness of some humans to come to grips with Jesus’ true identity, here seeing him chiefly as a miracle worker who can bring long-sought relief (see 4:22, 36–37, 40–41; the Note on 19:40).

Jesus of Nazareth: This form of Jesus’ name derives of course from his hometown (see 18:37; 24:19). But it also goes back to the long-standing and distinctive Israelite view that a settlement or town consists of a number of family households—*bet-’ab* (Hebrew for “house[hold] of the father”)—wherein the father bears responsibility for the social, economic, and religious welfare of all those within his home, including his wife, his married sons, his unmarried children, and his servants. Jesus’ title associates him

88. Harry M. Orlinsky, ed., *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology, and Architecture* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), 90–92, 104; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 71, 153–55.

89. *TDNT*, 2:9; 6:338–39.

90. *TDNT*, 3:413–31.

with the cluster of families residing in Nazareth and is qualitatively different from the title “son of Joseph” which has to do with only one household or family (see the Note on 3:23).⁹¹

the Holy One: The term separates Jesus from those who inhabit the unseen world and are unclean.⁹²

4:35 *Hold thy peace:* Literally, the verb (Greek *phimoō*) means “to muzzle,” as in “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox” (1 Tim. 5:18). On a metaphorical level, it means “to silence.” Mark 4:39 repeats this verb when quoting Jesus’ command to the sea, “be still.”⁹³ Jesus, of course, is speaking to the demon as the following words demonstrate.

in the midst: This phrase discloses an architectural aspect and illustrates that the center of synagogues in that era is open except for pillars that support the roof (see the Note on 4:20).

the devil had thrown him: We see a similar manifestation of power in the case of the youth whom Jesus later heals (see 9:42). We ask why Jesus allows the unclean demon to wrestle the man down in the synagogue. One answer is that, though the man experiences possession by an unwanted demon, Jesus wants him to know, and to become a witness of, not only the raw power of the unseen world, much as Joseph Smith does (see JS–H 1:15–17), but also the stronger power of deliverance (see the Notes on 11:21–22).

hurt him not: This benevolent note both adds to Mark’s information about this incident (see Mark 1:26) and evidently shows Luke’s interest in a person’s well-being.

4:36 *they were all amazed:* Luke continues his emphasis that people’s first reaction to Jesus’ words and deeds is amazement; commitment to Jesus follows, but not immediately (see 4:22, 32). This reaction becomes in effect “the shared recollections of a group” (see 4:32; 5:26; the Note on 4:14).

with authority and power: Verses 31 and 32 above anticipate the appearance of the last ingredient that resolves the issue which the devil introduces about authority and power during the temptations. According to verse 31, Jesus teaches “on the sabbath days,” hinting that he does so in a synagogue. Verse 32 affirms that his words come “with power” (Greek *en exousia*, properly “with authority”). Here, in verse 35, all comes together:

91. Christopher J. H. Wright, “Family,” in *ABD*, 2:762–64.

92. Marshall, *Luke*, 192–93, and the prior verse.

93. BAGD, 869.

in a synagogue, an institution of worship and devotion, Jesus' words of rebuke come with authority, and he uncovers his miraculous power (Greek *dynamis*). Moreover, those attending become witnesses even though they do not know how the issue arises.

Analysis

In a twist of irony, Luke informs us that demons know who the Savior is but some humans do not.⁹⁴ This situation explains in some measure why Jesus is misunderstood and rejected by many in his own society. For some reason, even with a physical witness, people do not or will not see Jesus for who he is. Luke does not impute motives to such people; he simply reports the gap between what Jesus says and does and how people perceive him. To be sure, those who witness Jesus' teaching and miraculous powers must have begun to ask whether he is the expected one. But curiosity about him—even joy over what he offers—in contrast to rock-hard loyalty to him, represents very different textures in personal relationships.

Even so, Jesus makes witnesses of the most casual observers. Beginning with his major announcement in the Nazareth synagogue and continuing with his efforts in the Capernaum synagogue, he creates first-rank witnesses of his divine character. Though people might reject him or simply be amazed at his powers, they have seen firsthand the palpable evidences of his ministry. This aspect fits tightly with the Gospel's prior emphasis that, as God's work begins to unfold, he clusters witnesses about important events so that it is plainly evident through all sectors of society that he is beginning to stir his work to life. We think of the relatives and neighbors of Elisabeth and Zacharias, and the acquaintances of both the shepherds and of Simeon and Anna.

It is curious that Jesus performs this miracle on the Sabbath, in a synagogue, while those needing his help wait respectfully until the Sabbath ends to come to him (see 4:40). After all, a prohibition against work of any kind has grown up as a part of Sabbath observance in Jesus' day because we see it surface in the accounts of his healing the man with the withered hand, the bent-over woman, and the man with dropsy, each occurring on a Sabbath (see the Notes on 6:9; 13:14–16; 14:3). In such cases, of course, he appeals to the need of animal owners to care for their animals on the Sabbath as justification for his merciful acts (see 13:15; 14:5). Hence, in

94. Green, *Luke*, 221.

the Capernaum synagogue, he evidently sees a desperate need, in a fellow human, that trumps the strictures of Sabbath observance that have become customary.

When we turn to Luke, the author of these verses, we may see an important indicator of his interests when he reports that, when the demon “came out” of the possessed man, he “hurt him not” (4:35). The story of this healing, which does not appear in Matthew, lacks the note “hurt him not” in Mark’s version. If Luke is following Mark at this point, then we have to open the possibility that he embellishes the account. But if he is carefully researching all the events of Jesus’ ministry that he records, as he affirms (see 1:3), then this added aspect has to be considered authentic. But why report it? One natural answer is that Luke harbors an interest in people’s health and well-being (see the Introduction V.B).

We wonder how observers perceive the Savior’s miracle of casting out the “unclean devil” (4:33–35). To some, it may have seemed modest. After all, Jesus acknowledges the work of other exorcists elsewhere, an apparently common phenomenon in the society (see 11:19). We read of such exorcists whom Paul meets (see Acts 19:13–16). But to others, Jesus’ act forms a bright signal that he can make a difference in the lives of those afflicted with disease and demons (see 4:40–41). Further, the power of Jesus’ miracles, begun here by liberating a man who has evidently suffered for a long time, will increase in the next two chapters until opponents cannot let them pass without a fight (see 6:11; 13:14).

As a town, Capernaum lies between the Sea of Galilee on its south and hills that rise to the north, bounding a rather narrow, sloping plain a few hundred meters wide. It stands next to one of the more important local roads that passes through this part of Galilee, making it an inviting stop for travelers. Much of the reason for the town’s existence therefore ties to regional trade and fishing. In fact, because Capernaum sits only two miles west of the crossing where the upper Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee, which stream serves as a territorial border between Galilee and Gaulanitis, a customs station stands just to the east of the town where officials collect tax revenues from merchants who cross the frontier carrying goods along the road. It is at this customs station that Jesus calls Levi to the Twelve (see 5:27–28).

HEALING PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW (4:38–39)

(Compare Matt. 8:14–15; Mark 1:29–31)

King James Translation

38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

New Rendition

38 And rising up from the synagogue, he went into the home of Simon. And Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a great fever, and they pleaded with him on her behalf. 39 And standing over her, he rebuked the fever and he freed her of it. And standing up immediately, she began to serve them.

Notes

4:38 *Simon's house*: Archaeologists have identified the remains of a structure that, because of embellishments in the first century AD that make it into a worship center, is thought to be Peter's home. It is important to note that Peter is well enough off to afford a home in the center of Capernaum, next to a main thoroughfare (see Mark 1:33; 2:2).⁹⁵ Whether he also owns property outside the town is not known. The fact that he is named makes him the first and chief witness of Jesus' ministry (see the Notes on 5:8; 24:34). Moreover, because Luke features him so early in his story, and at its end (see the Note on 24:34), we possess a literary *inclusio* that underlines the unity of Luke's account (see the Note on 5:8).⁹⁶

***Simon's wife's mother*:** The presence of Peter's mother-in-law in his home implies that he and his wife are caring for her and are fulfilling the duty of honoring aging parents, just as Jesus will affirm to the rich ruler (see the Note on 18:20). This duty will not disappear when Peter leaves home to follow Jesus, thus underscoring the ongoing importance of family relationships (see the Notes on 6:48; 11:21; 14:26; the Analysis on 11:14–28). Both he and his wife will still share this responsibility.⁹⁷

95. David C. Pellett, "Capernaum," in *IDB*, 1:532–34; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 218–20; Virgilio C. Corbo, "Capernaum," in *ABD*, 1:867.

96. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 124–47, 366–67, 388, 390–93.

97. Balla, *Child-Parent Relationship*, 121–24.

a great fever: Neither Matthew nor Mark indicate the intensity of the fever; only Luke does so, evidently showing an interest in people's physical condition (see the Introduction V.B).

they besought him: Apparently others from the synagogue come to Peter's home. Whether this number includes Peter's brother, Andrew, is not known, although we can confidently presume that he is present.

4:39 he stood over her: It is puzzling that Luke, who shows clear interest in the treatment of maladies elsewhere in his Gospel and the book of Acts, does not reproduce Mark's report that Jesus "took her [Peter's mother-in-law] by the hand" (Mark 1:31). Such an act, it seems, would be noted by a physician, particularly if Luke is indeed following Mark's narrative. We compare Luke's note about Jesus touching the leper at 5:13.

rebuked: The same verb appears in Jesus' rebuke of the demon at the synagogue (Greek *epitimaō*), putting the two miracles on a continuum, as well as others (see 4:41; 8:24; 9:42).⁹⁸

Analysis

These two verses frame a pair of important dimensions in Luke's rehearsal. First, they continue the story of the Savior's miraculous powers which he first unwraps in the synagogue just minutes before the scene in Peter's home. This element in Luke's report will soon expand beyond the healing of the man with the unclean demon and the woman with a high fever to include, among other manifestations, Jesus' powers to reverse the severe, lifelong disabilities of a quadriplegic and a blind man, as well as to intervene with the forces of nature in quieting a storm on the Sea of Galilee (see 5:18–26; 18:35–43; 8:22–25).

Second, they serve as a prelude to the miracle of the fishes that elevates Peter from being an admirer to a deeply committed disciple (see 5:1–11). To this point, Peter has heard Jesus teach in the Capernaum synagogue and has witnessed the two miracles on the same Sabbath day. And he will yet see the miracles that follow at the ending of that Sabbath (see 4:40–41). In Luke's recounting, all of these events stand as a perfect prologue to the first stunning conversion experience that he will narrate in the next chapter.

98. BAGD, 303.

THE WIDENING MINISTRY (4:40–44)

(Compare Matt. 8:16–17; Mark 1:32–39)

King James Translation

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. 44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

New Rendition

40 And when the sun was setting, all who had people afflicted by diverse maladies brought them to him. And he healed each one of them by laying his hands on them. 41 And demons also came out of many, crying and saying, “You are the Son of God.” And rebuking them, he forbade them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

42 And when it became day, he left and went into a deserted place. And the crowd searched for him, and came to him, and held him back so he would not leave them. 43 But he said to them, “I must announce the good news of the kingdom of God in other cities as well, because I was sent for this purpose.” 44 And he continued to preach in the synagogues of Galilee.

Notes

4:40 *when the sun was setting*: Sunset marks the end of the Sabbath and allows people to travel farther than a Sabbath day’s journey, or what the rabbis called a “Sabbath limit,” which is 2,000 cubits or about 1,000 yards.⁹⁹ Doubtless, neighboring people, now freed from Sabbath travel restrictions, take advantage of Jesus’ presence in Capernaum by coming to him because they know of his powers (see 4:23).

***brought them unto him*:** The sense may be that the healthy escort the ill, but the Greek expression allows that the healthy transport those unable to come under their own power. Before the end of the Sabbath, this sort of lifting and carrying is not allowed.¹⁰⁰

99. *Mishnah Erubin* 4:3, 7–8; Schürer, *History*, 2:472–73, 485.

100. *Mishnah Shabbath* 7:1–8:7; Schürer, *History*, 2:470–71.

he laid his hands on every one: This detail, missing from Mark's report (see Mark 1:32–34), draws attention to the practice of healing or blessing by touching with the hands. That Jesus begins this practice among his followers, and that they continue it, appears prominently in Luke's extended record (see 24:50; Acts 6:6; 8:17–19; 9:17; 13:3; 19:6; 28:8; the Notes on 5:13; 8:54; 13:13; 18:15).¹⁰¹

4:41 devils . . . knew that he was Christ: Luke's statement bridges back to the earlier scene in the synagogue wherein the demon spits out, "I know thee," revealing who Jesus is (4:34), although the congregants seem not to grasp what the demon is disclosing. Again, those in the demonic world know perfectly well who Jesus is.

crying out: A pattern of noisy demonic disruption begins to emerge, and will continue, based on this experience and the prior response of the demon in the synagogue that "cried out with a loud voice" (4:33).

he . . . suffered them not to speak: Although it is reasonable to believe that, at this point, Jesus is trying to keep his messiahship under wraps, the fact that the demons are "crying out" points to their efforts to inject chaotic commotion into his ministering activities. On this view, Jesus is controlling the scene, bringing order and quiet, as he later does when he banishes the noisy mourners from the house before raising Jairus's daughter (see 8:51–55, and the Notes on 8:54 and 13:27).

Christ: Literally "the Christ" in the text, Jesus does not give this title to himself until after the resurrection (see the Note on 24:26).

4:42 when it was day: If we are counting, this day is Sunday, following the ending of the Sabbath noted in 4:40 ("when the sun was setting").

a desert place: Two matters arise, each tied to one of the terms here. In the first, the word for "desert" (Greek *erēmos*) appears both as "wilderness" in the introduction to the Baptist's ministry, as the scene for the Savior's fasting, and as the place where Jesus seeks spiritual nourishment (see 3:2, 4; 4:1; 5:16).¹⁰² Common to these reports is the desert as a locale for personal, divine refurbishing. The second concerns the term "place" (Greek *topos*), which Luke later writes as his designation for Gethsemane, a name that we learn from other accounts (see 22:40; Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). At times, the word "place" confers a special, sacred significance on a locale

101. *TDNT*, 9:428–29, 431–34.

102. *BAGD*, 308–9.

(see the Notes on 22:40; 23:33). Such is even hinted in 4:17 where Jesus finds “the place” that he intends to read from Isaiah.¹⁰³

4:43 *I must*: Jesus expresses the divine necessity that lies in the Greek impersonal verb *dei*. This necessity will characterize his works and Atonement (see 2:49; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7, 44, 46; the Notes on 9:22; 19:5).¹⁰⁴

***therefore am I sent*:** This expression points to an ordination, a formal commissioning. See the Notes on 3:2 and 4:18.

4:44 *in the synagogues of Galilee*: While this reading is the best for where Jesus is, the earliest manuscripts for this passage (P⁷⁵, ⋈) preserve a puzzling variant: “in the synagogues of Judea.” Such a reading, entirely out of character here, does not do much to maintain one’s confidence in the earliest manuscripts of the Gospels.

Analysis

The Savior’s ministry now steps off the small, limited stage of Capernaum’s synagogue and reaches out to embrace those who live more than a Sabbath day’s journey from the city, a restricted distance of approximately a kilometer. This shift signals a widening path of activity. Moreover, in the course of a single Sabbath, Capernaum becomes the center point for Jesus’ exertions, for he performs two healings there and then welcomes those who come specifically to the town from outlying areas because they hear of his remarkable powers.

Subtly woven into the pattern of these verses sits the imposing question of Sabbath observance: How will Jesus treat the Sabbath? The fact that those who come to him for healing travel only at the end of the Sabbath implies a deep respect for its sanctity. And Jesus evidently reverences the custom of limited travel on the Sabbath, a custom that rests on “let no man go out of his place on the seventh day” (Ex. 16:29).¹⁰⁵ But Jesus is about to overlay the Sabbath with his own divine view of the day’s significance in people’s lives, a view that will jolt some of his hearers (see the Notes on 6:2 and 6:5).

In fact, he has begun. When he strides away from the threatening crowd in Nazareth on a Sabbath, he exerts powers that protect him and ward off hostile acts. When he casts the demon out of the possessed man in the

103. *TDNT*, 8:195–99, 204–7, for *place* as a sacred spot.

104. *TDNT*, 2:22–25.

105. Schürer, *History*, 2:472–73.

Capernaum synagogue, he performs a merciful act for the man through action. When he graciously heals Peter's mother-in-law following the worship service, he pulls celestial energies down to this woman. The last two instances bring forward Jesus' willingness to aid others on the Sabbath day, a type of aid that his critics will eventually challenge. Although these people have not yet begun to raise their shrill, chilling voices, Jesus' healings on this Sabbath form a warm, glowing prelude to more miracles and, inversely, to the cold hatred that is coming.

In a sense, the disrupting voices of the demons also point to the criticisms that will dog Jesus' ministry. In the demons' case, their noisy protests reveal their grasp of who Jesus is, an understanding that humans do not yet enjoy. In a way, their loud outbursts work to Jesus' advantage, drawing attention to him as a worker of mercy.

This observation stands against the idea that Jesus' muzzling of the demons is to preserve the secret of his messiahship. By Luke's account, he allows them to say enough so that those who are willing to pay attention will learn who he is. In addition, Jesus already announces publically who he is in Nazareth. In Luke's recounting of events, there is no "secret" about the true identity of the Savior.