

Jesus Gets to Work, Part 1

Luke 4:14-15

Take a look at your Bibles, and we'll pick up the narrative at Luke 4:13, "When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

"And he unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

"And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' And he said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum do here in your hometown as well.' And he said, 'Truly, I say to you no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel during the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of old, prophet, Elijah, Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman, a Syrian.'

"When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so," that, "they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away."

Thus begins the Galilean ministry. It's kind of sobering, isn't it? That's a section, this Galilean ministry, that is

going to run from here all the way to Luke 9:50. Jesus' Galilean ministry really does give us the substance of his earthly ministry, his teaching and his miracles. The calling and commissioning of the twelve disciples are found here. The Sermon on the Mount, many of the parables, the feeding of the five thousand, that's found here as well.

Peter's good confession and then the transfiguration, all that happened in and around Galilee during the Galilean ministry. And at the end of that time, Jesus came to the end of his Galilean ministry, which was the substance of his ministry and teaching and everything he did on earth, came to the end of that time, and he forecasted to his disciples some pretty ominous news. You can see if for yourself if you turn over to Luke 9:18, Luke 9:18.

And this section here at the end of Luke 9, it marks a major turning point in Jesus' ministry. This is where Peter makes the good confession, where he acknowledges Jesus' true identity and while the disciples believe they're heading into a time of restoration prosperity, of great victory, Jesus tempers their enthusiasm with warning.

Look at what it says there in Luke 9:18, "Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And

he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist. Oh but others say Elijah, and others that one of the prophets of old has risen.' Then he said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.' And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.'"

A lot of confusion, popularly, a lot of confusion in the culture about who Jesus was. It was crystal clear for the disciples, though, right? They weren't just wiser than anybody else, in fact, sometimes we can see throughout their lives and ministry they were downright thick. Heaven had revealed this to them. And for the time being, Jesus was content with the popular confusion about who he really was, but he wanted his close disciples to know. He didn't want the word about his true identity to get out just yet.

You'll see that theme running through the Gospel narratives where Jesus tries to prevent the spread of his miraculous power, prevent the spread of his own identity. When the demons proclaim, "We know who you are—the Son of God," and he tries to shut that down. You have to ask, Why? Why didn't he, if he came

to save the lost and seek the lost, if he came to be the Messiah, why not let the news out?

Well, he needed to avoid a premature coronation by those who were zealous in the land who wanted to see the Messiah quickly crowned that they might reign and rule with him. He had suffering to endure. He had a cross to die upon. And on the other side, for those who weren't zealous about seeing him crowned, but were actually jealous of him, he needed to prevent premature hostility from them, from the jealousy of the religious leaders, which would result in an early death. So Jesus knew he had to die in the exact manner, at the exact location, at precisely the right time, all according to the father's plan and schedule,

So there's a change of pace when we reach the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry in Luke 9. Look just ahead in Luke 9 while you're there at verse 51. It says there in Luke 9:51, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up," taken up where? To the cross, to suffering, to death. "When the days drew near to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

He set his face, he, he steeled himself. He set his jaw like flint, and he was absolutely determined and resolved. He would not be deterred. From that point on, Luke records

throughout the rest of his Gospel, Jesus' death march from Galilee through Perea to Judea to Jerusalem to face his executioners. As he declared resolutely in Luke 13:33, "I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem." Jesus knew he was heading to the cross.

So Luke records, you can go back to Luke 4, Luke records, first of all in his Gospel, the qualifying marks of Jesus' life and ministry, that's Luke 1:5 to 4:13. He records at the end of the Gospel, he records the purpose of Jesus' life in ministry, that is, to die for the sins of his people. And as we said, that goes from Luke 9:51 all the way to the end of the Gospel. This section, though, that we're entering into right here in the middle, Luke 4:14 to 9:50, we can call this the substance of Jesus' life and ministry. This is what it's all about. This is what the news reports are about. This is what they were talking about. This is what became known is what happened in these chapters.

The Galilean ministry itself covers about a year and a half. Th, this whole section we're about to get into, it starts in the winter of AD 27-28 and it goes all the way to the end of the summer in AD 29. He's going to be at the Passover on the

cross in the spring of AD 30, the very next year. When this middle section, the Galilean ministry, this substance of Jesus' ministry, this helps us grasp the spiritual significance of all of this.

This tells us why he was qualified on the first part, for what. It also tells us why did what he did. The focus throughout this section is on Jesus' teaching in all of its glorious simplicity and profundity. The divine authority of his teaching is not only heard in the nature of his teaching itself, but it's authenticated by God by divine miracles.

As we see, the narrative is punctuated by acts of supernatural power. His miracles aren't just shows, they're signs, like a signpost and they point us to something important. They point us to him, point us to his true words, his words of life that are spoken by this miracle worker. And if we don't understand the teaching, then Jesus' death is going to look pretty strange to us.

In fact, it looks pretty strange to many people in our own culture. It has always looked strange to people who don't believe. It's going to look, perhaps, like nothing more than a political statement. It's going to look maybe like a senseless, fruitless act of protest, that's how many have interpreted it.

But if we understand Jesus' teaching, we are going to see that his death is nothing less than salvation from the wrath of God for sins. Nothing less than an escape from punishment in eternal hell.

For now, we're just going to look at those first two verses of introduction, verses 14 and 15, before we dive into this experience he had in Nazareth. These two verses, verses 14 and 15, are absolutely critical for helping us understand what happened in Nazareth. These two verses, Luke has made a masterful transition from one section of his Gospel to another, from the qualification of Jesus to the substance of his ministry centered in Galilee.

And you wouldn't know it at first glance, but those two verses, verses 14 and 15, they actually cover about a year and a half of time. That's quite a summary, isn't it? Luke has fast-forwarded the story from somewhere around the summer of AD 26 to the winter of AD 27. And you get a hint of that in verse 23 when, when he anticipates the people saying, "What we have heard you did at Capernaum," past tense.

So evidently, Jesus had done something at Capernaum, a neighboring village on the north shores of the Sea of Galilee, about 15 miles or so from Nazareth. He had done something



noteworthy there, something remarkable. Luke doesn't record it here. It doesn't fit his purposes. He passed by the incident, but he did drop a hint that there is more to the story. And knowing, knowing that, it helps us to see what Luke meant when he introduces this section in verse 14, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee."

We don't want to get the wrong impression from that phrase, "Jesus returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee." We don't want to get the impression that Jesus came charging back from the wilderness immediately, full of zeal, ready to march into his hometown synagogue and get to preaching. Luke writes, the second part of the verse, "A report about him went out through all the surrounding country." We need to realize time had passed. Some things had happened. His fame had preceded him. He was already known.

Let's begin there with our first point, the circumstances of Jesus' return. Look at verse 14 again. It says, "Jesus returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country." We're going to divide this into two sub-points just to keep it all clear in our minds. We'll talk first about the meaning of

that phrase, that “Jesus returned in power,” and then we’ll talk about the circumstances of his return to Galilee.

So those two sub-points, Jesus returned in power and Jesus returned to Galilee. Jesus returned in power and Jesus returned to Galilee. “When the devil had ended every temptation,” verse 13, he left him, Jesus was left physically exhausted. He hadn’t eaten for forty days, okay. He was, was weak, he was tired, he’s hungry. There’s a spiritual strain that he went through going through all of this as a flesh-and-blood man. He had physical needs like calories. Just simple things like that, for he needed energy. He needed sleep to rest his body, rest his mind. He needed a time of physical restoration to engage the challenges of the ministry ahead of him.

And Matthew tells us actually, helps us to understand, Matthew 4:11, that after the devil left him, angels came and they were ministering to him there. That’s what angels do. It says in Hebrews 1:14 that angels are all “ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” Do you know who that is? That’s us. Angelic ministry for our sake. And that ministry is predicated upon an extension of their ministry here to the author of our salvation. We’re the

inheritors of salvation and receive their ministry. He's the author of our salvation. He's the Savior who won our salvation.

And here they are, Matthew 4:11, they're ministering to him. And for the successful fulfillment of his ministry, Jesus didn't just need his body rested, well-fed. He needed that. He needed more, though, than just that, just the physical sustenance and strength. He needed even more than angelic help. He needed a serious spiritual invigoration and all the physical stamina in the world attended by the ministry of all the angels in the heavens, none of that would lead to the accomplishment of his mission on earth without the attendant power of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 4:6, right, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." That's how Jesus conducted his ministry, in the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't want you to miss the connection to holiness. Luke kept it connected right here. Luke is the author. He kept, he keeps it connected. He skips over a year and a half of ministry that we're going to unpack today.

But he keeps Jesus' return in the power of the spirit to Galilee, he keeps it connected with his success in standing firm against the devil in the wilderness. Holiness, sinlessness,

that's power. He stood firm through the devil's temptations. The Holy Spirit is present with him in power. He's active and energetic in a holy life. There are no hindrances in Jesus' life, no sin to blunt the force of the spirit. Unlike us, Jesus is completely free from any weight from the sin which so easily entangles us. He's unhindered. He's full of the Spirit's power for ministry.

There's nothing in him to hinder the Spirit's work in and through his life. The Spirit's power is present in Jesus, and, and still his power is active in a way that's unique from me and you. There's a difference here. Notice that the, in verse 14, end of verse it says, "A report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country." This is one of the clues that Luke has given us, which allows us to see this verse is a summary. There is some report out there.

Where did it come from? I mean, if Jesus went directly from the wilderness, directly into Galilee to Nazareth, started preaching in his hometown synagogue, what report would have preceded him? If we're looking only at what's recorded in Luke's Gospel, it doesn't seem like there is much to tell. Something had happened; something significant. Word had gotten around, as we noted just a minute ago, at verse 23, the report of what

Jesus had done in Capernaum, that had reached the village of Nazareth. That had been spread. So we'd be left to guess at what, at what happened if God had not left us without a witness. But he hasn't. He's given us a witness in his Word. He gave us the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, and you'll want to turn over there to fill in the details.

Let's fill in the gaps of this year-and-a-half summary that Luke has given us with the sub-point here: Jesus' return to Galilee, Jesus' return to Galilee. There are some stages in this return to Galilee because of what's written in the other Gospels and particularly in John 1 and following. We're able to track Jesus as he moves from Judea to Samaria and enters into Galilee. We might describe his return in stages. Stage one we could call the exposure in Judea; stage two we could call evangelism in Samaria and stage three establishment in Galilee. Exposure, evangelism, establishment.

So stage one: Exposure in Judea. Here in the first chapter of John's Gospel, right after the prologue, verses 1-18, John enters into his record about Jesus' life and ministry. And he does it like the other writers do, through the witness of John the Baptist. We come upon a scene right at the start of inquisition. We, we come upon the Jewish leaders who had sent

some of their people, some of their envoys to come and interrogate John the Baptist about his identity.

Let's look at verse 19 and we'll start reading there. This is the testimony of John. "When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I'm not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.'" So they said to him, 'Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I'm the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord," as the prophet Isaiah said.' Now they had been sent from the Pharisees."

We see that this is a suspicious interrogation. It's a hostile interrogation. "And they asked him, 'Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize you with water, but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.' These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing." And we'll stop there.

We, when we studied about the ministry of John the Baptist in Luke Chapter 3, his ministry was of no minor consequence. The crowds were drawn to this man. They saw him as a prophet. And there was no prophetic voice for 400 years in Israel, so when this guy came to town, he stood out. He got their attention. He was self-evidently a true prophet of God. The crowds were so numerous. His, his appeal was so diverse and so widespread. He started attracting some political attention.

As we talked about when we studied that section, Herod Antipas sent some of his soldiers even to investigate, thinking this might be another insidious attempt to unseat him from his power and they, those soldiers came, they came to John's ministry and they came under conviction. They had heard his preaching, and they were convicted and they wanted to repent. Not exactly what Herod Antipas wanted, but there they are, nonetheless.

As we see here, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, they also took notice. They heard and they sent some of their priests and Levites to make inquiries. So with this gathered crowd, heightened sense of conflict, some opposition, the political and the religious leadership, paying close attention, scrutinizing, the stakes are high, tension is thick and guess who comes back

from the desert at that moment? Verse 28, "These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing." Oh, where Jesus had just left a month ago, a month and a half ago. "And the next day," verse 29, "he saw Jesus coming toward him and he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

"This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me." I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John bore witness: 'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and have born witness that this is the Son of God.'"

Timing, again, is amazing, isn't it? It's probably been a month and a half, maybe two months since John baptized Jesus. He that was there when the heavens opened, when the spirit descended, he heard the voice of the father. When Jesus went up out of the water, he disappeared. He walked off. He didn't come



back. No doubt John wondered where he went. But he had a ministry of baptism to fulfill; he had to attend to that.

He did start talking about it right away, didn't he? He couldn't, can anybody keep a preacher's mouth shut? Right! He, he just started going off. He can't stay silent and especially now when the, when the subject about whom he is speaking and testifying, when that person shows up. All this tension, all this scrutiny, all these questions. Jesus arrives. Purpose of his ministry, John's ministry is being fulfilled right here. All during Jesus absence, those forty days in the wilderness, the time of physical restoration, John's been talking about it, telling everyone. Now he shows up. He's adding fuel to already ignited fires of Messianic expectation among the crowd.

That no doubt again caught the attention of the religious establishment in Jerusalem. The emergence of the Messiah, represent for them, for the religious leaders, they would think, Oh, Messiah's here. Time to make some introductions. Let them know we've already got things pretty well handled around here in Jerusalem. We want to let you know who's in charge, what the ranking structure is as you're coming in to take over. They want to probably jockey for position, give him assurances that they were the right man for the job.

Jesus had other plans. They didn't know that. Here with the envoys of Jerusalem looking on, Jesus reappear, reappears. John testifies yet again, pointing to Jesus. John's disciples', their ears perk up. They take keen interest. Look at verse 35, his, they've learned under his prophetic ministry. This is so exciting. Verse 35, "The next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and they looked at Jesus as he walked by and he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following and said," to him, "to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi,' which means teacher, 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see.'"

If you keep on reading in the narrative, you find that Andrew was one of those. He found his brother Simon. They are two of the first of Jesus' disciples to meet Jesus. Then it says in verse 41, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He left Judea here to go to Galilee, to the city of Bethsaida. That's where Andrew and Simon were from. They were later relocated to Capernaum, that's where they lived, but they were evidently born and raised in Bethsaida.

Then Jesus after that found Philip. He added him to the group. We read at the end of the chapter how Philip found

Nathaniel. Nathaniel becomes convinced that Jesus is who he says he is by his remarkable prophetic even supernatural insight into his prayer life, as he is praying in private underneath the fig tree, and along with the other men, all of whom had been looking for the Messiah, anticipating his arrival.

They're excited. This interest is definitely generated by John's ministry. These men have been studying the Scriptures. They've been followers of John, learning from his ministry. And now that they see Christ, they turn and follow him. They are among the first disciples; they followed him right into Galilee. So that's Jesus' first exposure in Judea through the testimony of John the Baptist.