

Gospel of Luke - Chapter Four

III [Luke 3:1-4:15 - Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus \(continues/concludes\)](#)

III.b [Luke 3:21-4:15 - The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus \(continues/concludes\)](#)

Summary of Chapter Four

Following his baptism, Jesus went from the Jordan into the Judæan wilderness in order to confront the devil. For forty days the devil tested Jesus during which time he did not eat or drink anything.

At the time of writing this I had a great conversation with a former pastor, who has experienced the wilderness and described that it was far from being a 'God-forsaken' place, but rather a place where 'the presence of God is powerfully evident'. This makes the temptation of Christ, and of us, all the more interesting when it comes in a place where the presence of God is felt and known, i.e. at times when we feel most at ease, rather than at times when we may feel abandoned, alone or in peril!

The devil did his utmost to test Jesus as though he were a mere mortal, which in many ways he was. He offered him worldly goods and power, in return for his allegiance to Satan, but Jesus prevailed and was clearly triumphant.

From this time in the wilderness, we can learn that we can serve God only, that we should not crave things that are not given to us by him, and that we should never test him.

Jesus then returned to his home town and on the Sabbath he read from the scriptures, stating that he was the one, chosen by God, to fulfil what was written about the Messiah, and that he was there to bring the good news. Initially, he was well received, but when people realised they thought they knew his origins, they turned on him and wanted to kill him.

Jesus left Nazareth and relocated to Capernaum, which became his main base during his ministry in Galilee. He taught the people there and healed a man with an evil spirit, which identified Jesus for who he really was.

News began to spread about Jesus and his power over evil spirits. We also have accounts of Jesus healing many sick people and his need to seek solitary places, where he could pray to the Father.

III.b.iii [Luke 4:1-15 - The temptation of Jesus](#)

The temptation is the last preparatory event before Jesus' public ministry begins. It is tied intimately with the declaration of his son-ship at his baptism, as we saw during that event (Luke 3:22), and is confirmed by references made by the devil in v.3 and v.9.

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert,

[Luke 4:1](#)

Jesus, having been anointed by the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:22), and full of the Holy Spirit, as was Elizabeth when she greeted Mary (Luke 1:41), is led by the Spirit to face Satan. The Holy Spirit guided Jesus in his earthly life, providing a pattern for Jesus' followers to be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, as confirmed also in Matthew 4:1 <<Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil>>. And Paul writes to the Galatian churches: <<So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want>> (Galatians 5:16-17).

Being 'Led by the Holy Spirit' is something we should all seek.

² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

[Luke 4:2](#)

Forty days is reminiscent of Israel's 40 years of wilderness wandering, which came about after 10 of the 12 spies had given a bad report due to lack of faith in God. The Lord spoke unto all Israel saying: <<For forty years – one year for each of the forty days you explored the land – you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you>> (Numbers 14:34). Also, the 40-day fasts by Moses: <<Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments>> (Exodus 34:28). Also: <<When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water>> (Deuteronomy 9:9), and with Elijah: <<So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God>> (1 Kings 19:8).

We see that Jesus' experience of 40 days of fasting in the wilderness corresponds to Israel's experience of 40 years of testing in the wilderness. Jesus endured his testing victoriously and obediently. Moses also fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights on two occasions, and Elijah at least once. Fasting was and still is a means of focusing intently on prayer. Forty days is about the longest a human can fast without permanent bodily damage. For most people, liquids should be taken during extended periods of fasting.

He was tempted is a present participle that indicates that Jesus was tempted the entire 40 days and that the three temptations mentioned were probably the culmination.

Devil comes from a Greek term diabolos and is used seven times in Luke-Acts. It commonly translates the Hebrew satan. Although the devil intends to thwart God's plan and purposes, the

Father uses Satan's evil intention for the good purpose of strengthening Jesus in his messianic role. Satan is the supreme adversary of God.

³ The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread. ⁴ Jesus answered, It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone'.

Luke 4:3-4

If you are the Son of God implies a challenge for Jesus to demonstrate his divine power. Satan is asking in essence, 'Why should the very Son of God have to suffer in the wilderness in this way?' Jesus, of course, was and is the Son of God but he refused to be tricked by the devil into using his divine prerogatives to make the trial any easier for himself. Jesus obeyed as a man should, as the representative for all who believe, so as to: <<fulfil all righteousness>> (Matthew 3:15b), and on behalf of his people.

Tell or command this stone to become bread. Satan tempted Jesus to use his power to satisfy his own desires rather than trusting in God to supply all that he needed during his temptation.

Jesus' reply here and in the following temptations begins with: it is written, followed by a quotation from Deuteronomy that tells what the people of Israel should have learned in the wilderness: man does not live on bread alone and is from Deuteronomy 8:3, where it is written: <<He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD>>. Satisfying one's need for food is not as important as trusting and obeying God.

Jesus was hungry and in a state when many would be tempted by the thought of food, but he had also spent a long time in communion with God the Father. This would strengthen him beyond any temptation as it should us. Satan could not tempt Jesus for there was no inner weakness for him to attack. We have, but must always guard against leaving easy routes in.

Also, to turn a stone to bread would be a miracle, which were always used either to help instill faith in his disciples, as with changing water into wine in John Chapter 2, or for the help of others through miraculous healings. They were never used for mere human satisfaction and neither would Jesus, at any point, use his miraculous powers for his own benefit. Without doubt, he could have had a feast in the wilderness had he so desired, for it is written of the Israelites in the desert that: <<They spoke against God, saying, Can God spread a table in the desert? When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?>> (Psalm 78:19-20), which, of course, he did! In fact, he fed well over one million people for forty years. Jesus would also not have undertaken anything that was against the Father's will. The psalmist confirms this by writing: <<They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle>> (Psalm 107:5-7).

Many scholars hold the location of his testing to be Mount Quarantania, located between Jerusalem and Judæa; others have suggested that it was as far away as Mount Horeb, which would link the account to that of Moses and Elijah, but there is no conclusive proof either way.

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, I will give you all their authority

and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours. ⁸ Jesus answered, It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'.

Luke 4:5-8

The devil led him up introduces another temptation but does not imply that the temptations occurred in this order. Matthew has a different order and more indications of chronological sequence. This temptation involves being shown: in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

Again, the location and even the view Jesus was shown has various suggestions. Some say the Devil used a trick to portray what the worldly kingdom would look like, rather than a physical view of it. Others say it was a literal mountain and that Jesus would have been looking over a relatively small region. Many, who like this suggestion, prefer Pisgah at the top of Mount Nebo, which is to the east of the Jordan, to be the location. This is where God took Moses to view the Promised Land prior to his death (Deuteronomy 34:1).

I will give you. Satan claims that all their authority and splendour or glory of the kingdoms has been given or delivered to me, and in some sense Satan is the 'ruler of this world'. As John 12:31 puts it: <<Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out>>, and John further confirms this in 1 John 5:19 <<We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one>>, the claim should not be accepted as fully true. Satan is and always will be: <<a liar and the father of lies>>, as stated in John 8:44. One final thought: <<Jesus answered, You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above>> (John 19:11a). In the final analysis, all authority belongs to God.

Paul confirms in his statement that we should honour civil government because they are established by God: <<Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer>> (Romans 13:1-4), and as David puts it: <<The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it>> (Psalm 24:1). Daniel, when speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar, said: <<The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people>> (Daniel 4:17). Because of common grace, even a fallen world still gives glory to God. This is confirmed in these words: <<And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory">> (Isaiah 6:3). Satan's offer is a temptation to break the first commandment: <<You shall have no other gods before me>> (Exodus 20:3).

When God instructs us to 'love our enemies', as in Matthew 5:44, it shows that, although he hates evil, he still brings many blessings in this life, even to his enemies. He does so by means of common grace, i.e. the favour that he gives to all people and not just to believers. These blessings are intended to lead unbelievers to repentance. Of course, there is a sense in which God hates those who are resolutely and impenitently wicked, but God's blessings of common grace constitute his primary providential action towards mankind here and now.

Matthew 5:45b says: <<He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous>>. We also see in Job Chapters 1 and 2 that Satan can only do what God permits him to do anyway.

Jesus replies that worship belongs to the Lord your God alone. Those who don't explicitly worship God implicitly worship Satan, even though they may not understand that is what they are doing.

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰ For it is written:

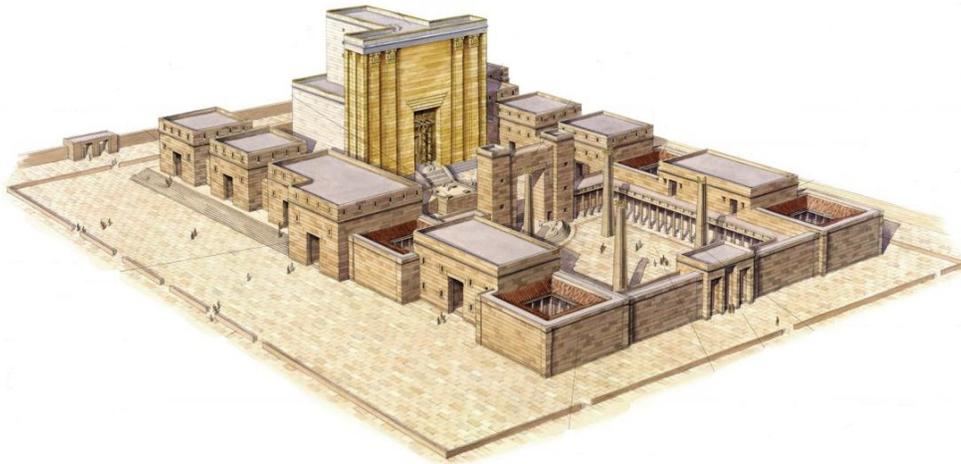
'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'.

¹² Jesus answered, It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'.

Luke 4:9-12

The next temptation takes place on the highest point or pinnacle of the temple, which is the south-eastern corner of the Temple Mount, overlooking the Kidron Valley. It was some 300 feet or 91m above the floor of the Kidron Valley according to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 15.411-412).



He will guard you. This time the Devil quotes scripture from Psalm 91:11-12 but does so deliberately incorrectly, for the psalmist did not mean that a person should attempt to force God to protect him.

The devil's quotation from Psalm 91 is a blatant misuse of scripture in an effort to manipulate Jesus. Such a spectacular display as jumping from this great height, unharmed, would have gained him an enthusiastic following but it would not have followed the Father's messianic and redemptive plan of suffering and proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven. Had he jumped and his human body perished, then the Father's redemptive plan would have needed to be changed, which is something that would never come to pass.

Jesus replies Do not or You shall not put the Lord your God to the test from Deuteronomy 6:16. All of Jesus' answers come from God's word, specifically from the book of Deuteronomy,

which was highly respected in Jesus' time. By quoting scripture back to Satan, Jesus demonstrates the centrality of God's word in defeating Satan's attacks and temptations. As Paul puts it: <<Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God>> (Ephesians 6:17).

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:13

He left him. Although the Devil will remain active in opposing Jesus' ministry, Jesus will not experience such a direct confrontation again until his crucifixion. Although Satan did entice Judas to become the betrayer, so we must never underestimate his power and must always align our ways to God's ways, and keep in communion with him, if we are to prevail.

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

Luke 4:14-15

Having experienced divine confirmation and anointing by the Spirit at his baptism, and now through his victory over the Devil in the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit to begin his ministry. He moves from a defensive position to an offensive one. This is later confirmed in Luke 23:5, where it says: <<But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judæa by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here">>, and when Peter was speaking with Cornelius and says: <<You know what has happened throughout the province of Judæa, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached>> (Acts 10:37). We looked at the connection between power and Spirit in Luke 1:16-17 but to recap:

The terms spirit and power are frequently associated as in the words of Jesus instructing the disciples shortly before his ascension: <<But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth>> (Acts 1:8), and where Peter addresses Cornelius: <<how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him>> (Acts 10:38). Again, as Paul writes to the Roman church: <<May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit>> (Romans 15:13), then to the Corinthians: <<My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power>> (1 Corinthians 2:4). To the Ephesians: <<I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being>> (Ephesians 3:16), to the Thessalonians: <<because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake>> (1 Thessalonians 1:5), and, in his final letter to Timothy: <<For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline>> (2 Timothy 1:7), for the Holy Spirit imparts power for ministry.

That Luke describes Jesus as everyone praised him or being glorified by all indicates Luke's strong belief in Jesus' deity.

IV. Luke 4:16-9:50 - The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee

Except for Luke 8:22-39, where they sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, this next section of Luke centres on Galilee.

IV.a Luke 4:16-5:16 - The beginning

Jesus began his ministry by preaching in his hometown of Nazareth. Soon thereafter, he was preaching in many places, healing many people and calling disciples to work with him.

IV.a.i Luke 4:16-30 - Jesus rejected at Nazareth

This account clearly demonstrates the fickle nature of humans. They recognise something glorious in Jesus and praise him for it. Then they turn on him like a wild pack.

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

Luke 4:16

Nazareth was the place where he had been brought up so he started his teaching here. Other references to this period are found in Luke 2:39-51.

As was his custom reveals Jesus' faithful attendance at the synagogue. He had probably been invited to speak as a lay person in the past but never with the impact he would have on this occasion. Ever-increasing archaeological evidence exists for the importance of the synagogue in early Jewish communities. Many synagogues have been discovered from the Roman and Byzantine eras in Palestine and throughout the Roman world, e.g. <<When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue>> (Acts 17:1), in Corinth, Luke writes of Paul that: <<Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks>> (Acts 18:4), and of Apollos, Luke writes: <<He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately>> (Acts 18:26).

In cities other than Jerusalem, the synagogue was the centre of Jewish worship during the time of Christ. Synagogues were located in most of the leading towns of Israel. Although very little remains of the original 1st Century synagogue at Nazareth, extensive archaeological evidence exists for a typical Jewish synagogue in the town of Gamla, which would have had much in common with the synagogues Jesus visited in Nazareth and other cities.



This illustration is based on the excavation of the Gamla synagogue, one of the oldest in Israel. The city of Gamla was 6 miles or 9.7km northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was destroyed by the Romans in AD67, early in the Jewish Revolt.

From Galilee and Judæa, 1st Century synagogues have been unearthed at Gamla, Masada, Herodium and Capernaum. Excavations at Capernaum have revealed residential structures, a synagogue and an octagonal Christian site. Based on thousands of coins found below its pavement, Capernaum's prominent, well-preserved synagogue has been dated to the 4th or 5th Century AD, although some argue it is earlier. However, beneath this were found walls of a previous structure, which is very likely the synagogue of Jesus' day. The 5th Century octagonal building, designed like many Byzantine commemorative Christian holy places, stands over a 4th Century church built by modifying a 1st Century house. This marks the traditional site of Peter's home.

The synagogues typically consisted of large rooms, including some basilicas, built with the intent of serving as synagogues, with bench seating along the wall. Often the Torah ark, which is the storage place of the OT scrolls, is found within the synagogue and there is evidence for some synagogues, e.g. Chorazin, of a special decorative seat called the Seat of Moses. Moses' seat is traditionally understood as referring symbolically to the authority of Moses. However, recent archæological evidence has revealed a literal chair found in early synagogues. Whether literal or figurative, it refers to a place from which experts on the law taught.

Literary evidence indicates that Sabbath services at a synagogue involved singing, set prayer readings and the reading of scripture. In Palestine, this probably involved regular annual Sabbath reading cycles in Hebrew, with Aramaic translations or interpretation, as confirmed in Mishnah, Megillah 4.1-5, 10. There would also have been an interpretative homily on the weekly scripture reading and a priestly blessing.

The leadership of the synagogue fell to the elders of the congregation and to officials such as the ruler of the synagogue, e.g. Jairus in Mark 5:22. Also evidenced, was the practice of 'putting out of the synagogue' those who were at variance with accepted belief and practice, such as we see in the story of Jesus healing a man who was born blind: <<His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue>> (John 9:22).

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

[Luke 4:17](#)

He found the place. A passage chosen for Jesus to read was Isaiah 61:1-2a, but he also quoted from Isaiah 58:6.

Throughout history, it has been the tradition to have readings from the Torah and the Prophets every Sabbath. These would normally be chosen by the ruler of the synagogue, who would be a scribe or a Pharisee, and would have been in keeping with the Jewish calendar of readings, i.e. it is likely that the same passage would be read in most synagogues that same day. A lay reader, such as Jesus would have been in the eyes of the Jewish leaders, may have been asked to read a chosen passage, but it would only be an official that would give an interpretation of scripture. Jesus would, no doubt, have been asked to read on previous Sabbaths as this was his home synagogue. By chance, or most likely providentially by the will of God, Isaiah 61:1-2a was given to Jesus to read this

particular week. As we will see, something was very different on this occasion as, after he had finished the reading, everyone watched him in anticipation. And he would not disappoint them!

It is almost certain this event took place after the wedding in Cana recorded in John Chapter 2, for on that occasion he told his mother: <<"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come">> (John 2:4). On this occasion, Jesus' time had come.

¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is on me. Jesus is aware of his anointing, as we saw during his baptism in Luke 3:22, and confirmed by his disciples prayer in Acts 4:26-27 <<You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one. Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed>>. We also have Peter, again speaking with Cornelius in Acts 10:38, saying: <<how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him>>, and claims to be the messianic servant of the Lord, who is speaking in this passage from Isaiah 61 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled', that is repeated in v.21.

Jesus' mission involves proclaiming good news to the poor, as in these words: <<Looking at his disciples, he said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God>> (Luke 6:20).

Freedom to the prisoners. In the OT this meant release for those enslaved in exile but more is included here, since liberty elsewhere in Luke-Acts refers to forgiveness of sins.

Sight for the blind includes both the physically blind and the spiritually blind.

To release the oppressed included in Jesus' ministry, healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving sins and ethical teachings that promote social justice.

Proclaim the year of the Lord's favour is quoted from Isaiah 61:2 but the background is the Year of Jubilee: <<Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan>> (Leviticus 25:10). This is in view in this entire passage.

Jesus carries out the role of a prophet by proclaiming the good news but he also carries out the role of Deliverer or Saviour as in Luke 1:74, as the one who saves his people, for it is stated: <<She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins>> (Matthew 1:21).

By proclaiming the word of God in this way, Jesus was opening up the scriptures as if for the first time, so that people could hear and understand them in a new way. As it is written: <<For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the

scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, Read this, please, he will answer, I can't; it is sealed>> (Isaiah 29:11), and eventually we will hear this song: <<You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation>> (Revelation 5:9b). Despite opening up a new understanding of the scriptures many of the people would still not perceive what was happening. Luke describes it in this way: <<The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognise Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath>> (Acts 13:27). The text read gives a full account of Christ's undertaking and the work he came into the world to do, because:

1. He is qualified for the work (The Spirit of the Lord is upon me).
2. He was commissioned because he has anointed me and sent me.
3. He was qualified:
 - In his role as a preacher.
 - In the content of his message (The Gospel).
 - In his healing (physical, spiritual and giving peace).
 - In his role as redeemer by setting people free from the burden of their sin.
 - In his application of God's word to his own lifestyle.
 - He was full of grace and truth.
 - He fulfilled all the scriptures written about the Messiah.
 - He would clear the way for us to come back to God.

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,

Luke 4:20

The eyes of everyone were fastened on him is a literary, attention-getting device that focuses the reader on what Jesus is about to say.

After the Jews had resettled in Jerusalem following their captivity in Babylon, the temple and the city walls were rebuilt. At the completion of the latter, Nehemiah the governor called for a holy convocation and invited Ezra the scribe to read the word of God to the people. Nehemiah 8:4a states: <<Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion>>. Some scholars say that the Hebrew is best translated as 'built for the word', which would seem very fitting for this occasion, where Jesus starts his ministry.

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

Luke 4:21

On scripture being fulfilled, we read in Luke 24:44 <<He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms>>.

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn't this Joseph's son? they asked.

²³ Jesus said to them, Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum'.

Luke 4:22-23

Proverb. There is a similar proverb at the time of the crucifixion: <<The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One>> (Luke 23:35). For Jesus' awareness of people's thoughts, which is an indication of his deity, we have: <<The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?" >> (Luke 5:22), <<The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone". So he got up and stood there>> (Luke 6:8). There are similar examples in Luke 7:40, Luke 9:47 and Luke 11:17.

Part of their problem was that people want the miracle for the sake of the miracle. They wanted the sick to be cured, the lepers healed, the deaf to hear and the blind to see, as having such people was a cost and blight on the community. The main purpose of Jesus' miracles was to be an aid to coming to faith in God the Father through the Son and all that it entails for us all.

²⁴ I tell you the truth, he continued, no prophet is accepted in his home town.

Luke 4:24

I tell you the truth, is used over 70 times in the Gospels, was placed by Jesus at the beginning of statements rather than at the end. It emphasises the truth of what follows.

No prophet. After the raising of the widow's son, we have: <<They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us", they said. "God has come to help his people" >> (Luke 7:16).

²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed – only Naaman the Syrian.

Luke 4:25-27

Citing examples from the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, Jesus reminds the people of Nazareth that, when Israel rejects God's prophets, God sends them elsewhere; even to Gentiles. At this the crowd became angry, as they did in Acts 22:21-22 <<Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles'. The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!>>

The story of Elijah and the widow at Zarephath can be found in 1 Kings 17:7-24; and Elisha with Naaman in 2 Kings Chapter 5.

²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

Luke 4:28-29

The attempt to kill Jesus was confirmed by the words of Simeon at the temple: <<so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too>> in Luke 2:35, and they revealed that the shadow of the Cross was cast early in Jesus' ministry. The anger of the crowd turned to mob rule primarily at their resentment that, although they had spurned the covenant of God through their persistent rejection of his Law, it would be the Gentiles that would benefit, despite Israel being the chosen race. However, scripture had continually predicted that God would turn to the Gentiles, e.g. Isaiah 42:6, 49:6 and 49:22. It was also noted that: <<He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him>> (John 1:11), and: <<but Jesus said to them, I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?>> (John 10:32).

The early rabbinic document known as the Mishnah recorded, in the late 2nd or 3rd Century AD, that the only proper way to stone someone was by throwing the person down the cliff. However, it is likely that official death penalty practices were in flux during the 1st Century. Like other stoning incidents in the NT, which more typically involved pelting someone with rocks, was the action of an unlawful mob, as under Roman rule only government officials could carry out a death penalty.

Properly, at least two reliable eyewitnesses were required, as written in the law in Numbers 35:30 <<Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness>>, and in Deuteronomy 17:6-7 <<On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you>>. The rabbis later taught that, after the court's careful verdict, the witnesses should act on behalf of the court to execute the criminal. The body of the stoned person was then to be hung up on a stake until sundown in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:22-23 <<If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a tree, you must not leave the body hanging on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance>>. The rabbis considered stoning a legitimate death penalty, especially for those whose sins included adultery, blasphemy, idolatry, and witchcraft, persistent rebellion against parents or Sabbath breaking.

³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Luke 4:30

Walked right through the crowd. Luke does not explain how Jesus did this but, since an entire mob was arrayed against him, some miraculous deliverance by the power of the Holy Spirit would seem to be the case. It was not yet Jesus' time to die because his hour had not yet come. As Jesus said elsewhere: <<Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour — when darkness reigns>> (Luke 22:53), and a similar incident: <<At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come>> (John 7:30). Although unexplained, these instances are clearly providential.

IV.a.ii Luke 4:31-37 - Jesus drives out an evil spirit

The healing of the man with a demon in vv.31-37 will be the first of 21 miracles recorded in Luke's Gospel.

³¹ Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people.

Luke 4:31

Capernaum was discussed before and had become Jesus main base in Galilee.

A town in Galilee. As we read, in conjunction with Luke 1:26, Luke's specifying that Capernaum was a town of Galilee suggests that his intended readers, including Theophilus, were not from Palestine and would therefore be unfamiliar with the city's location.

Excavations at Nazareth have located tombs, olive presses, wells and vaulted cells for wine and oil storage, indicating that the village was a small agricultural settlement. Nazareth was located on a road leading from nearby Sepphoris into Samaria. The current Church of the Annunciation lies atop previous early Byzantine church structures and caves from the 4th century or possibly earlier. These commemorated the early life of Jesus and his family.

³² They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

Luke 4:32

The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching, as confirmed in Luke 2:48, in v.22 and Luke 9:43, because his message had or possessed authority. In contrast to their rabbis, who merely cited the opinions of other rabbis, Jesus' teachings had inherent authority, i.e. the authority of God himself, as confirmed in Matthew 5:22 <<But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother Raca is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell>>. His authority is also seen in the following triumphs over demons in v.36 and v.41, and in his healings in vv.39-40.

³³ In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴ Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!

Luke 4:33-34

Come to destroy us? The demon recognises Jesus as the Holy One of God, who has come in the power of the Holy Spirit to triumph over demonic powers. For example, in Luke 10:17-18 <<The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name". He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven>>, or where Jesus says: <<But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you>> in Luke 11:20, and from a different perspective, when demons make an appeal to Jesus in Luke 8:31 <<And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss>>.

I know who you are. The demons know who Jesus is, see v.41, but they do not believe in him with personal trust, unlike Peter: <<We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God>> (John 6:69).

³⁵ Be quiet! Jesus said sternly. Come out of him! Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

Luke 4:35

An unclean spirit tries to resist Jesus' power and his teaching on the Kingdom of God but he correctly fears that Jesus has come to destroy him. The act of naming Jesus as the Holy One of God may display the demon's attempt at exercising power over Jesus. But Jesus resists and tells the unclean spirit 'be quiet'. The spirit demonstrated his intent to hurt the man by throwing him to the ground but, without physically intervening, Jesus ensured that the man was unharmed.

³⁶ All the people were amazed and said to each other, What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!

Luke 4:36

All the people were amazed because Jesus was able to cast out demons with a word. Jesus' triumph over demons was a clear indication that God's kingdom was breaking into the present age in a new and decisive way, driving back demonic forces and setting people free to serve God. In Matthew 12:28, Jesus says: <<But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you>>. However, despite their amazement, many still did not come to faith, which is something that still happens today, even when unbelievers witness the miraculous for themselves.

Extra-biblical Jewish literature contains stories about strange rituals for casting out evil spirits, e.g. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 8.45-48; Tobit 8:2-3; and Testament of Solomon throughout, but it is unclear if they were successful.

The most comical story of the Sons of Sceva is probably an example of this: <<Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out". Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding>> (Acts 19:13-16). The amazement of the crowd in v.36 indicates that Jesus' authoritative casting out of the demons: <<with a word>> in Matthew 8:16c was unprecedented. No example of people casting out demons is found in the OT, although there is the case of David calming the evil spirit in Saul by playing music. See 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

Jesus' amazing powers over demons was due to the power of the Holy Spirit working through him. The Kingdom of God is inaugurated, though not completely realised, in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus is not only the messianic Son of David but the King who exercises God's own kingdom power against Satan and his agents, and overcomes the kingdom of Satan through his much greater power.

Jesus was able to expel demons because he had resisted Satan. Beginning with Jesus' victory over Satan during the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus demonstrated that Satan was powerless to prevent him from proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and demonstrating the reality of its presence through his work and his words. Satan's house represents the sinful world over which, until the coming of Christ, he had such power. Jesus has come to plunder his house and rescue people for the Kingdom of God.

³⁷ And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Luke 4:37

Throughout the surrounding area confirms Jesus' fame has spread even more as we see in these words: <<Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses>> in Luke 5:15. Great crowds gather: <<from every village of Galilee and from Judæa and Jerusalem>> in Luke 5:17, <<from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon>> (Luke 6:17), and: <<spread throughout Judæa and the surrounding country>> (Luke 7:17).

IV.a.iii Luke 4:38-44 - Jesus Heals Many

A significant part of Jesus' ministry was the power to heal the sick and to raise the dead. This was a compassionate ministry but was also used to help people to understand the Gospel he was proclaiming to them.

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

Luke 4:38

The fact that Simon's mother-in-law had a high fever underscores the miraculous nature of the healing, as confirmed in Mark 1:30, where we read: <<Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them>>. Simon was also called Peter as confirmed by: <<Simon (whom he named Peter)>> (Luke 6:14), and Cephas: <<And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)>> (John 1:42).

It would seem that, once again, Luke is not following strict chronology but wants to finish one theme, i.e. the start of Jesus' ministry, before focusing on another part. It is generally accepted that Jesus had called his first disciples, including Peter, before the incident happened at his home as described above. Luke's style and structure in no way detract from the narrative or the authenticity of the Gospel he is giving.

³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

Luke 4:39

Rebuked the fever is the only instance in the Gospels where Jesus' words are addressed to a disease.

Bill Johnson, the leader of Bethel church in Redding, California, teaches this technique and has seen great works of God around the world as a result.

At once emphasises the power of Jesus and the immediacy of his healing grace.

⁴⁰ When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Luke 4:40

The sun was setting. Sundown in Galilee marks the end of the day. Therefore, it marked the end of the Sabbath in this case. People are now free to move around again and can bring people to Jesus for healing.

Various kinds of sickness reveals the breadth of Jesus' healings. Other examples of 'laying on hands' and the immediacy of his healing power are in Luke 5:13 <<Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing", he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him>>, and Luke 13:13 <<Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God>>.

All who had various kinds indicates a large crowd of people waiting to be healed.

Although it was late, the sun was setting and Jesus had had a long day, he did not choose to miraculously perform an instantaneous 'group healing', but paid individual attention to each person by laying his hands on each one, and thereby he healed them.

⁴¹ Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, You are the Son of God! But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

Luke 4:41

Moreover, demons came out. Luke clearly distinguishes between the casting out of demons and healing, showing that not all diseases are due to demonic power though some diseases do have a demonic origin. A good example of this is found in Luke 13:10-17, which tells the story where Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath.

⁴² At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent. ⁴⁴ And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judæa.

Luke 4:42-44

They tried to keep him from leaving not because they believed in him but they liked the outcome from the miracles he was performing among them. We will see this again as described in John 6:26 <<Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill>>.

Kept on preaching in synagogues. Jesus is called not just to heal but to preach and teach the good news.

To the other towns also. Neither Nazareth nor Capernaum had exclusive rights to Jesus' time and ministry as we saw in vv.25-27. Luke often refers to what must be, emphasising the necessity of God's providential plan being fulfilled.

Preach the good news of the kingdom of God is the first of 31 such references in Luke. Kingdom should be interpreted dynamically as reign and not statically as with a territory.

Jesus, as we now know, was sent by God.

Synagogues of Judæa most probably refers to the wider region including Galilee, Samaria and the Decapolis rather than the narrow Roman province around Jerusalem in the south.