



Rejected

Jesus' offer of salvation will be rejected by some, leading to judgment.

LUKE 4:16-30

Life is a series of related decisions. Think about the decisions we already have made today and how they impacted where we are right now or what we are wearing. Even the color of our socks or if we have on socks might be dictated by another decision made earlier in the day. In the same way, what we do with Jesus impacts other areas of our lives. Believing in Him or rejecting Him will dictate other decisions. The people of Nazareth faced the same decision and would face the consequences of what they decided.

How can one decision impact future decisions? Give an example.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

LUKE 4:1-44

Jesus' earthly ministry officially began with His baptism by John in the Jordan River (Luke 3:21-22). Luke followed this account with Jesus' genealogy. As a historian, it would have been important for Luke to trace Jesus' roots. Interestingly, he worked in reverse order, beginning with Jesus, who had been declared God's Son at His baptism, and ending with a different "son of God," Adam (3:38). In this passage, Adam represents a type of Christ—an individual with no human father and given life by the breath (Spirit) of God.

Following His baptism, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to face the temptations of Satan (4:1-13). Again, readers can reflect back to a similar situation faced by Adam in the garden of Eden. But unlike Adam, Jesus did not fail. He used the power of God's Word to repel Satan's repeated attacks.

Once tempted and proven faithful, Jesus began His public ministry with a trip to His home region of Galilee and particularly His hometown of Nazareth (4:14-30). Jesus' hometown failed to embrace Him, offering resistance and even rejection. His claim to be the Messiah offended those who believed they knew Him well, leading them to expel Him from the local synagogue.

Jesus moved on from Nazareth to Capernaum. His time there began with an exorcism on the Sabbath (4:31-37) and a healing at the home of Simon Peter (4:38-39). In each instance, Luke presented a Messiah who held power over all spiritual kingdoms (as first demonstrated in His rejection of Satan earlier in the chapter) and over all human diseases. With these examples, the writer may have been showing the error of Nazareth's residents. One with this kind of authority should be accepted rather than rejected.

Luke concluded this section with a reference to even more healings and exorcisms in Capernaum (4:38-44). Sharing the good news of God's kingdom to as many people as possible remained Jesus' mission.

Read Luke 4:16-30 in your Bible, identifying the actions taken by Jesus. How did His actions point to His identity?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

TRUE IDENTITY (LUKE 4:16-21)

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. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 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. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

VERSES 16-19

Nazareth was a small agricultural village. The residents were naturally interested in the return of the young preacher who had been *brought up* there. While Jesus was born in Bethlehem, His parents took Him to Egypt to escape Herod’s rampage. Upon returning, the family resettled in Nazareth.

Luke emphasized that Jesus’ appearance in the *synagogue* was *his custom*. He was in the habit of attending services and on this occasion was invited to stand and read in the assembly. Most likely, the leader of the congregation asked Jesus to take part in the service ahead of time, as would be common with a visiting teacher. Other elements of the service would have included the quoting of the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9), prayers, hymns, and a final blessing.

The attendant handed Jesus the *scroll of the prophet Isaiah*. *Unrolling* is the proper way to describe Jesus’ actions. While contemporary readers often think in terms of books, the Book of Isaiah would have been contained on a scroll that would be unrolled to the desired passage. It is not clear whether Jesus chose the text Himself or not. Some scholars believe that synagogues used a three-year rotation through the Law and possibly from the Prophets. Luke’s language suggests that Jesus intentionally selected this passage to introduce His role as Messiah.

DID YOU KNOW?

The entire text of Isaiah could be contained on a single scroll, as shown by the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the most famous and best-preserved ancient scrolls is the “Isaiah scroll,” a nearly complete copy of the Book of Isaiah dated to the second century BC.

The passage Jesus chose comes from Isaiah 61 and anticipated the work of the coming Messiah. First, the Messiah would **proclaim good news to the poor** and **proclaim freedom** to the captives. In Luke’s writings, *the poor* can refer to the humble, not just the economically disadvantaged. Likewise, *freedom* included salvation from sin as well as physical healings and demonic exorcisms.

The Messiah also would provide **recovery of sight for the blind**. While this would certainly include physical healing, Isaiah also recognized the need to heal spiritual blindness (Isa. 6:9-13). Likewise, freeing the **oppressed** carried spiritual implications. While many first-century Jews interpreted the Messiah as a military leader who would rescue them from bondage to Rome, Jesus’ role as Messiah involved salvation from bondage to sin.

Finally, the Messiah would proclaim **the year of the Lord’s favor**. This was Jesus’ announcement of God’s kingdom at work on earth. While this was good news to those who believed, it also served as a warning that God’s favor would not always be available. A time would come when the window of opportunity would close.

VERSES 20-21

Luke pointed out that the eyes of every attender were **fastened** on Jesus. They were anticipating His explanation or interpretation of the passage He had just read. Jesus told them that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in their presence. In essence, He was letting them know that their long-awaited Savior was standing in their midst.

What role does Scripture play in helping us understand Jesus’ identity and purpose?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation (Regeneration)*

Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:8-13).

FALSE UNDERSTANDING (LUKE 4:22-27)

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!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’” ²⁴ “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 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.”

VERSES 22-24

The residents of the town where Jesus grew up thought they knew Him well, so what He was saying was hard for them to understand and embrace. They ***all spoke well of him*** and ***were amazed*** at His words. The Greek construction of verse 22 is unclear as to whether their responses were positive or negative. The words can be taken either way. The phrase *spoke well of him* can also be translated “testifying against him,” depending on the context.

The reactions seemed to be positive. Luke used the words in a positive sense in other places, and it’s not difficult to think the people could appreciate His powerful delivery and teaching about God’s grace, even if their kind words did not translate into genuine faith. They would be like the crowds who heard Jesus speak with authority on other occasions (Matt. 7:28-29; Mark 1:21-22). While some responses were likely positive, the residents were skeptical. They had seen Jesus grow up and identified Him with His earthly family. They had difficulty seeing Him as anything other than ***Joseph’s son***.

Jesus recognized the doubts behind the kind words, and He addressed their attitudes directly. The term **proverb** can refer to a parable or allegory, a short story that serves to illustrate a deeper point. It represented a saying that had been passed down orally from one generation to another. In this case, the command to **heal yourself** may have been a call to show loyalty to one's hometown first. While the people showed a measure of appreciation for their hometown product, they also would require proof to truly believe His declaration. They had heard all the great stories from other towns. Now, they wanted Him to help them. They had heard about Him healing in **Capernaum** and wanted Him to do the same in Nazareth.

But Jesus had no intention of turning His mission into some kind of carnival attraction. He only acted to accomplish what God commanded in God's timing. So in response, Jesus turned Nazareth's proverb on its head with a proverb of His own. The idea that **no prophet is accepted in his hometown** was historically accurate. In fact, many of Israel's greatest prophets were either persecuted or martyred by their own people.

In Jesus' case, the people of Nazareth rejected the boy they knew because He refused to meet their expectations. They might have wanted a show of power like Jesus had presented in other parts of Galilee, but their mental and spiritual obstacles made that nearly impossible.

**What preconceived ideas about Jesus might a person hold today?
How do those ideas get in the way of accepting Him as Savior?**

VERSES 25-27

Jesus continued with an illustration from Israel's history involving two of their greatest heroes: Elijah and Elisha. Luke may have had a special interest in these prophets because of their connection to the Gentiles. If Theophilus (Luke 1:3) and other readers of his Gospel were Gentiles, showing God's grace to those outside Israel would have been vital to Luke's message.

During the days of the divided monarchy, **Elijah** fearlessly preached against the sins of the Northern Kingdom. For all his

faithfulness, his own people turned against him. When God sent a **famine** to the land, He went outside the Jewish nation to provide protection and support for Elijah. Instead of sending the prophet to an Israelite widow, the Lord directed him to a Gentile widow from the town of **•Zarephath** in **•Sidon** (1 Kings 17:7-16).

Likewise, Jesus pointed to the ministry of **Elisha**, who also served God faithfully in the middle of the Northern Kingdom's wickedness. Like his mentor Elijah, Elisha experienced rejection and abuse at the hands of Israelites. Jesus reminded His listeners that lepers were abundant in Israel at that time. God could have moved to bring healing to any one of them. However, He chose to use Elisha to make a difference in the life of a Syrian military leader named **Naaman** (2 Kings 5:1-14).

Through these real-life illustrations, Jesus demonstrated that familiarity does not guarantee God's work. Nazareth could not assume God's blessing if they insisted on rejecting the One whom He sent. Both the widow of Sidon and the general from Syria were shown mercy and miracles. The residents of Nazareth would get neither.

BIBLE SKILL: *Observe when and for what purpose a New Testament passage includes an Old Testament quotation (or reference).*

Read Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17 and the story of Elisha and Naaman in 2 Kings 5. What aspects of these Old Testament stories and Jesus' application might enrage strict Jewish adherents? What kind of situations might cause us to respond in similar circumstances?

MISGUIDED RESPONSE (LUKE 4:28-30)

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

VERSES 28-30

All the platitudes ended abruptly once Jesus called out the people of Nazareth for their lack of faith. Their subtle disdain transformed into outright violence. But Jesus once again showed His authority, proving His identity as Messiah. Jesus' rebuke enraged His listeners.

The combination of Jesus' criticism and His suggestion that God blessed Gentiles was more than the residents of Nazareth could take. They expected their Messiah to meet their needs and secure their land. The flipside meant the Gentiles should be punished, not embraced. Jesus' teaching upended their core beliefs.

The negative response was widespread. Everyone in the synagogue was offended. The ones who had admired Him were now indignant toward Him. Instead of sitting back and seething, the crowd took action. Not satisfied to simply chase Jesus out of town, they forced Him **to the brow of the hill** outside the village and intended to **throw him off the cliff** to His death.

Ironically, the crowd's passion might have been expected toward Jesus' initial proclamation. By claiming to be the Messiah, He was also claiming to be God. That was enough to raise a charge of blasphemy and a sentence of death. But they seemingly were not offended by His claims of deity. They were angered by His apparent disregard for them as God's chosen people. In their minds, He had rejected Nazareth, so Nazareth rejected Him.

Luke said that Jesus **walked right through the crowd**. It is not clear how Jesus suddenly turned the tables on the violent mob, but His authority over the situation is evident. In effect, the people saw a miracle in the form of Jesus' deliverance from them.

Jesus did not need an army of angels to rescue Him. The fact is, that Jesus' time had not come. He knew His mission would end in His death, but He also understood God's timing. Until then, nothing would prevent Him from continuing His work. Jesus was not working on their timetable nor was His identity impacted by what they thought of Him. Luke noted that Jesus **went on his way**. Scripture does not indicate that He ever returned to Nazareth.

How does the crowd's reaction to Jesus compare to the reactions of people today?

APPLY THE TEXT

- Jesus came to offer salvation.
- All people must examine their presuppositions about Jesus.
- Rejection of Jesus does not change His identity.

If a friend asked what you believe about Jesus, how would you respond? What could you share from this passage that might help you give an answer?

Discuss ways your Bible study group could help other people explore what they believe about Jesus and discover the truth. What actions can the group take to help others discover the truth about Jesus?

When have you reacted poorly to something Jesus was doing in your life? What did you learn from that experience?

PRAYER NEEDS
