

"And He Opened the Book"
 God's Word and Life Transformation
 Luke 4:14-22

Background: Jewish males would travel to Jerusalem for the festivals, but Sabbath worship for all Jews occurred at the synagogues of the cities. Some believe synagogue worship came into existence during the Jewish exile in Babylon (607-537 BC.), a period when the temple lay in ruins. The word "synagogue" simply meant "assembly" or "congregation" but eventually came to mean 'building.' Let me describe it.

(1). The building - simple, entrance facing Jerusalem, raised platform in center, dignitaries at front.

(2). The worship - Congregation recites the Shema (Deut. 6:4), a reading and exposition from the Torah, a reading from the prophets, with the *Chazan* (minister) designating the readers and teachers for the day; prayers were offered, and psalms sung (chanted). This worship occurred every Sabbath (Saturday), but the synagogue was also used as a school during the week, and often as a 'court' for the people.

(3). The location - every community with a Jewish population had a synagogue supported by the people.

Our text says Jesus *"began teaching in their synagogues."* Jesus began his public ministry teaching in the Jewish centers of learning. He comes back to His hometown of Nazareth and enters into the synagogue, *"as was His custom."* Our text says ***"and He opened the book"*** and read to the people from Isaiah 61.

I. The Lord gives us His word to transform us, not just inform us.

Rick Warren was once asked what the best translation of the Bible was. He answered: *The one you translate into your life.* God gave us the Bible to transform us, not simply inform us. It should give us a bigger heart, not a bigger head. In the Book of James, we're told, *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* (James 1:22). Our beliefs are to translate into behavior.

(A). The Bible is compared to tools - God calls His word a hammer, a sword, and a scalpel.

(B). The Bible is compared to food - God calls His word milk, water, bread, and meat.

II. So hearing God's Word should change us, not just entertain us.

I'm sure Jesus came to the point of reading from Isaiah and the curiosity of the Jews was aroused. "Is this not Joseph's son?" they asked. The written word is designed to show us the LIVING WORD.

(A). Good News to the poor - It's not just those destitute of wealth, position, influence and honor; it is also those in spiritual and emotional need. (Matt. 11:28; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17.)

(B). Deliverance to the captives - (Lit. *"Those held at spear point"*). The Word declares freedom to everyone held captive by Satan's power! (See Prov. 13:1 and 1 John 1:9).

(C). Recover sight to the blind - Those who've been blinded by the world and the one with dominion in this world (See 2 Corinthians 4:4; 3:14; 11:14 and 1 Timothy. 4:1).

(D). Free those who are oppressed - God brings life and healing in His Word to those who've been crushed. The Spirit uses the Word to birth life within. Faith, hope and love blossom in me.

(E). The favorable year of the Lord - Jesus stops reading mid-verse. Isaiah 61:2 says *"To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God."* Why did Jesus stop reading? Those who translate the Word of God into their lives have nothing to fear in terms of vengeance.

III. The Word of grace will either make one a sage or fill one with rage.

"...and all wondered at the gracious words ('words of grace) which were falling from his lips" (v. 22). Next time we'll see the entire synagogue turning against Jesus and being "filled with rage" (v. 28). Jesus told us He was 'hated without a cause' (John 15:25). He was always loving and accepting of people, but He never hesitated to help people be free from destructive, self-indulgent lifestyles.