

# **LUKE**

“The Spirit Anointed Ministry of Jesus Christ”

*Luke 4:14-21*

Sunday, March 12, 2017

By David A. Ritchie

*“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through 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 to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. 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 and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ And 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” (Luke 4:14–21, ESV).*

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the words of your Holy Scripture that are living, active, and breathed out by your Holy Spirit. Today, I pray that the same Holy Spirit that inspired these words and anointed Jesus Christ your Son for ministry would illuminate our minds to understand your truth and empower our hearts to obey you. We pray this in the glorious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **I. Introduction**

- We are now at long last at that very moment in our study of Luke’s gospel account when the public ministry of Jesus Christ begins. Luke has taken his time getting here by the way. More than any other gospel author, Luke has wanted us to see all that took place leading up to the birth of Jesus. He has wanted us to see how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus and baptized Jesus. As we saw last week, Luke has wanted us to witness Jesus go into the wilderness and defeat the temptation of the devil.
- So Luke’s story is in a place of built up expectation and anticipation for Jesus to begin his ministry. But we may ask, *what is it that has changed so that Jesus’s ministry may now begin?* To answer that question I think we simply have to look at a recurring theme that Luke has begun to emphasize.
- *“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21–22, ESV)*
- *“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness” (Luke 4:1, ESV)*
- *“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee...” (Luke 4:14a, ESV)*
- *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...” (Luke 4:18a, ESV).*
- Luke is presenting a very Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-anointed ministry of Jesus Christ.

- Now for some of you, those words immediately trigger negative connotations of ways that language about the Spirit of God has been misused and abused. You might tend to associate phrases like “the power of the Spirit” with charlatans and televangelists who are try to swindle money out of people.
- However, I would hope that this text would both challenge us to see the power of the Holy Spirit in a different light. The concepts of being “Spirit-filled,” “Spirit-led,” and “Spirit-empowered” are biblical terms. Even more they are words that Scripture uses to describe “The Spirit-anointed Ministry of Jesus Christ.”
- *Thus, we must not let the counterfeit scare us away from the reality.*
- In fact, I would challenge us to press deeper into what the New Testament calls life in the Spirit.
- For as we see in this text, to be Spirit led is to be like Jesus.<sup>1</sup>
- So as we take a deeper look into this text, I want to specifically look at how the Holy Spirit moves in the life of Jesus and how that same Holy Spirit can move in our life as well. There are three principles I want to explore: **1.) The Holy Spirit Empowers the Mission of God, 2.) The Holy Spirit Works in and Through the Word of God, and 3.) The Holy Spirit Reveals the Identity of Christ and Our Identity in Christ.**

## II. Text

### **1.) The Holy Spirit Empowers the Mission of God.**

- Jesus returns to Galilee and immediately begins a ministry, which we know from later in this chapter included powerful teaching and displays of powerful miracles. But this text explicitly shows us that Jesus’s power is “the power of the Spirit” (4:14), and the result of this power is that Jesus is “glorified by all” (4:15). This is a theme of the New Testament: *the power of the Spirit and the glory of Christ always go together.*
- The Spirit isn’t just empowering Jesus to have a more convenient life, the Spirit empowers Jesus for the mission of the kingdom
- A focus on the Spirit apart from mission creates something man-centered and goofy
- Miracles are not for entertainment or the glory of man
- The supernatural ministry of Jesus and the purpose of signs is to point to the reality of the kingdom
- Application: praying for the empowerment of the Spirit, longing for God to move through us beyond what we could ever accomplish in our own strength
- Answered prayers. Sick people recover. Hopeless marriages redeemed. Prodigal children come home. Freedom from demonic addictions.

---

<sup>1</sup> “We already have noted the importance Luke placed on the Spirit’s coming at Jesus’ baptism. This theme is picked up in 4:1, 14, 18–19, 36. Luke retained the reference in the tradition to Jesus’ being led by the Spirit into the wilderness (cf. Matt 4:1), but he added the statement that Jesus was “full of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1). We have noted already the frequency and thus the importance of this expression in Luke-Acts. Jesus’ victory over the devil thus resulted not simply because of his knowledge and use of the Scriptures (as in Matthew) but also because he was ‘full of the Spirit.’ Thus unlike Israel, which failed in its wilderness experience, God’s Son was victorious. The Spirit’s importance in this is evident, and Jesus’ experience became a model of how Theophilus was to live out his life. Even as Jesus, “full of the Spirit,” was victorious over the devil, so in Acts, Peter (4:8), Stephen (6:5, 8; 7:55), Barnabas (11:24), and Paul (13:9) were also filled with the Spirit and followed in their Lord’s footsteps. Luke’s readers are exhorted by their example to be filled with the Spirit as well. The concluding summary again emphasizes that Jesus’ entire future ministry is to be understood as taking place ‘in the power of the Spirit.’” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 149.

## 2.) The Holy Spirit Works in and Through the Word of God.

- After some fairly generalized language describing the beginning of Jesus's ministry, Luke chooses an episode from Jesus's hometown of Nazareth to be the first moment of Jesus's ministry that he describes in detail.
- And how does it begin? Well, honestly it doesn't begin with a lot of fan-fare. Jesus simply goes to a synagogue service and publically reads that day's Scripture reading.
- Now scholars have made the interesting observation that *right here in Luke 4 we have the oldest known account of a Jewish synagogue service.*<sup>2</sup> These were communal gatherings that would take place on Saturday, which was and is the Jewish day of Sabbath. A synagogue service would begin with a sing of a Psalm and a corporate confession of faith. Then there would be a reading from the Old Testament Law, a reading from the one of the Old Testament Prophets. Then there would be a sermon, and the service would close with a benediction or final blessing.
- If that sound familiar, it is because Christian worship services have historically taken their cue from the Jewish synagogue – in which the regular reading of scripture was the centerpiece.
- Now this may seem like such a small and insignificant observation, but what we are seeing here is that the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered Jesus honors Scripture. He ministers in and through Scripture. In other words, the word of God and the Spirit of God are not opposites or mutually exclusive. In fact, in the life of Jesus, and even in the life of the early church, they go together.
- Sadly, this is not a principle that many churches embrace today. I have heard a very prominent teacher once say, why should we trust in a Bible that the apostles didn't have when we could trust in the Spirit which they did have? Now there are all kinds of things wrong about that statement.
- The Holy Spirit wrote the word of God
- The word testifies to the reality of Spirit
- We must not divorce these values
- The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures he authored
- The Word points us toward a Spirit-empowered life in Christ
- Want life in the Spirit? Want to hear the voice of God? Read the Bible. Be moved and challenged and comforted by the Bible. Hear the words of the Spirit. Let the word of God be a way that God actively reigns in your life.
- When we come before the Bible, we are not coming before just any book that can be clinically studied and dispassionately examined. We are coming before the living and active and Spirit-breathed words of a living and active and spiritual God: *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12, ESV).
- Let the word of God be a way that the Spirit of God speaks to your daily life
- Want to understand the Bible? Ask for the Spirit to illuminate your mind and enflame your heart as you read God's word.

## 3.) The Holy Spirit Reveals the Identity of Christ and Our Identity in Christ.

- Jesus is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. And it is no consequence that the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered Jesus unrolls this scroll to the introductory passage of Isaiah 61: *"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 and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* (Luke 4:18–19, ESV).

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 155.

- The prophet Isaiah had prophesied of a servant of the Lord who would one day come. The Spirit of the Lord would be upon him and he would be a proclaimer of good news. What was this good news? It was that he would set captives free. He would give sight to the blind. And he would bring forth the year of the Lord's favor – otherwise known as the year of jubilee. Now what was the year of jubilee? It was a year that came along once every fifty years, essentially a once in a lifetime event, when all debts were forgiven, all slaves were set free, and all inheritances that had been lost were restored. In the Jewish worldview, all of these images would have collided together to build the hope of God's kingdom coming to earth. This would all come about by an "anointed one." And in Hebrew there was a specific term for this "anointed one" called the "mashiah," the "messiah."
- Now there are several interesting things about what is happening here. First, it is very likely that Jesus is reading these words and beginning his ministry during an actual year of jubilee, which would have made this reading all the more impactful.<sup>3</sup> This may be part of the reason why there was such a sense of expectation by the crowd when Jesus finished this reading.
- But secondly and most importantly, Jesus begins to tell them: *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21)*. In other words, Jesus is saying "I am not going to give you an explanation of this Scripture, rather I am going to be the embodiment of this Scripture."
- *For years these people knew who Jesus was, but now – through the words of Scripture – the Spirit is revealing who he really is.*
- He is the anointed one, the messiah, the Son of God.
- And in the same way that the Holy Spirit continues to reveal not only the true identity of Christ, but also the identity that believers possess in Christ.
- ***"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16, ESV).***
- When you become a believer, you are given the new identity as a child of God. You may know that mentally, but it is a job of the Holy Spirit to press that truth into your heart.
- Tim Keller says it this way: ***"When the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus at his baptism, he hears a voice say, 'This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased. You are my Son, and I delight in you.' In the same way...the Spirit bears witness to our hearts that we are children of God. Part of the mission of the Spirit is to tell you about God's love for you, his delight in you, and the fact that you are his child. These things you may know in your head, but the Holy Spirit makes them a fiery reality in your heart."***<sup>4</sup>

Redeemer, I pray that we would be a people who press deeper into the reality of the Holy Spirit. I pray we would be empowered by him and experience more of him. I pray that he would strengthen us for mission, that he would speak to us by his Word, and that he would wash us anew in the new identity we have been given in Christ. Amen.

### **Community Group Discussion Questions**

- 1) Where are the different places you see the Holy Spirit mentioned in Luke 4? Why do you think Luke is emphasizing the Holy Spirit so much at this point in his gospel account?***

<sup>3</sup> "It can be calculated that AD 26–27 was a jubilee year (cf. 3:1 note). Thus Jesus' citation took account of the actual jubilee year in which his ministry began and from which it gained a background of eschatological expectancy." I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 184.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. (New York: Dutton, 2014), 172.

- 2) *Why do you think the topic of the Holy Spirit can be so abused and misused on one hand and neglected on the other?*
- 3) *How should Jesus's spirit-filled life serve as a pattern for Christians? How should we seek a greater empowerment and experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives?*