

Episode: Luke Series No. 5

Narrator: James

Primary Scriptures: Luke 4: 14-44

Story Summary: The beginning of the ministry of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 4:18-19, 4:32, 4:41, 4:43

Luke introduces James into this story when Jesus taught in his hometown of Nazareth. The unbelieving people of Nazareth used the existence of Jesus' family to dispel the notion that Jesus was anything special.¹ Luke thought it was important to point out that Jesus was rejected in his hometown. Apparently, Luke wanted us to know that familiarity does breed contempt, so we must guard against that in our own lives.

When Jesus made it clear that non-Jews will receive salvation, the people became enraged and tried to kill him. The Jews of the time were very jealous of their special relationship with God.

There is no proof that James believed Jesus to be the Son of God while Jesus was alive. In fact, there are some verses that indicate Jesus' brothers opposed his ministry. However, the book of *Acts* says that James later became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

This episode portrays James as following Jesus for several days during his early ministry. There is nothing in the New Testament that says he did or did not do such a thing. This episode's storyline does allow an understanding of why Jesus chose Capernaum as his headquarters instead of his hometown of Nazareth. We also get a glimpse of the early days of Jesus' ministry when he spent much time healing people, casting out demons, and teaching. He did this not only in Capernaum, but also throughout the region of Judea.

Luke 4:31 is a hint of things to come. It says that the people were amazed because Jesus' words had authority. The people were not just impressed, but absolutely amazed. Why? Probably because they were used to hearing religious leaders quote other religious leaders who quoted other religious leaders. The words they were hearing from their religious leaders may have been correct, but they certainly lacked true authority and authenticity.

Of the many religious leaders of the time, the Pharisees were most stung by the reaction of the people. They knew the Scriptures, studied all the time, and were devoted to following the rules they had made so they could better satisfy God, so the authority of Jesus was a serious threat to their leadership positions.

¹ Matthew 13:53-58

Discussion Questions:

1. When Jesus left Nazareth after being threatened, wouldn't Mary have been concerned about her son? What actions might she have taken to verify his safety and well-being?
 2. Why did Jesus keep the demons from identifying him as the Son of God? Wouldn't their testimony be overwhelmingly powerful?
 3. Why were the people amazed at the words of Jesus?
 4. Why did Jesus choose Capernaum as his headquarters?
 5. Why do you think James had such a hard time believing in Jesus? How would you feel if your relative became a famous Hollywood star or politician?
 6. How did James' early reaction to Jesus affect his actions and thoughts when he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem?
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1. His words had authority. They were used to hearing the stale words of the Pharisees. 4. It sat on a major trade route which made it convenient for people to come see him, news of his ministry would spread quickly, it was far from Jerusalem and the most powerful Jewish leaders. 6. He was reputed to have prayed incessantly.

Application Questions

1. If you believed somebody could heal your severe physical ailments, what would you be willing to do to get in front of that person and ask to be healed? Would you do the same for severe spiritual ailments?
2. The people of Nazareth got furious at Jesus because he said people who were non-Jews could be more faithful than Jews. Do you ever get upset when Christians with different beliefs than you appear to be more faithful than you? What might you do with those feelings to channel them into a deeper discipleship?
3. Based on this passage, is it more important to help people meet their physical needs or to tell them the gospel story? Now, try to prove the opposite of what you first answered.

Application Questions for Teens

1. Have you ever had a friend that others thought was amazing, but you didn't? Was that because you knew something others didn't, or might you have been jealous?
2. If you had been Jesus, what kind of miracle would you have performed in your hometown just to show them you could? Be honest!
3. Jesus did not heal everybody who wanted healing or do every miracle people wanted him to do. What do you want God to do in your life that you would consider a miracle? Do you want it badly enough to pray regularly for it, but still believe in God if he chooses not to do that miracle?