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11 Following the Messiah Episode 5 (5:27- 8:18) Who Is Jesus?

Opening:

1. You have viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 5 at www.appianmedia.org and have worked through the study guide (Lesson 11) available at www.appianmedia.org/free-download.
2. This study continues our examination of the question "Who is Jesus?" in light of the events that transpired in Nazareth, the city of His youth.

Into the Text:

1. Reading of Lk. 4:14-30.
2. It is obvious from verse 14 that Jesus' experience in the synagogue at Nazareth was not one that was uncommon. After His baptism and the temptation in the wilderness He returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit and news about Him spread." He was teaching in the synagogues. Already in a previous study we have observed that synagogues were plentiful in the region. Archaeology reveals that not only were there synagogues in the cities and towns, but some were located in rural areas.
3. In the worksheet by Appian Media Darrell L. Bock's N.T. commentary on Luke is referenced to give us insight into the typical order of a synagogue service. "To appreciate the account, it helps to understand the order of an ancient synagogue service (m. Megilla 3-4; m Berakot 2). To have a synagogue service required the presence of ten adult males. At the service, the Shema was recited (Deut. 6:4-9), followed by prayers, including some set prayers like the Tephillah and the Eighteen Benedictions (m Berakot 2:2). After this the Scripture was read, beginning with a portion from the Torah (Gen-Deut) and moving next to a section from the Prophets. Instruction then followed. Often the speaker linked the texts through appeal to other passages. The service then closed with a benediction."
4. As you read Luke's account and imagine the recurrence of these events in the synagogue at Nazareth we are probably not too far off to imagine that such events occurred regularly here. I can imagine Jesus having participated in the synagogue events at Nazareth from His youth. It was all a very familiar scene. Perhaps they were in the process of reading through Isaiah. A copy of the scroll was handed to Him. He found the place of Isa. 61:1-2. There were no chapter and verse divisions. The text was probably in the Hebrew dialect. Certainly not the KJV! Isaiah is filled with passages about the Messiah and the coming Kingdom.

Jesus read a short passage. Closed the book. Sat down. Everyone waited. He said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." His words were gracious. They spoke well of Him. They questioned, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

5. It is not entirely clear how much the people understood about His claim. But as we look back on the incident with our understanding we know that He is claiming to be the Messiah.

6. I have generally assumed that all the events described here occurred on the same day, but perhaps not. I can see the events developing over a period of time in Nazareth. At this particular assembly He read. They responded by speaking well of Him, wondering and questioning. Then later (consider verses 23-27) there were demands for miracles and the response was different. Now they are filled with rage and drive Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built to throw Him off. He slips away from their midst.

I do not know exactly how the events unfolded of course. I just know that often when new information is considered it takes people time to think through what they may mean. Talking with others often produces opposing views, further considerations, questions, demands and confrontation.

7. The Isaiah passage is quite comforting (see Isa. 61:2-3). To realize that God has sent His special servant to care for you reminds us of the "consolation of Israel" that Simeon was looking for (Lk. 2:25). But Jesus does not respond like the people of Nazareth would have Him to. Interesting that there is a comparison between what He had done in Capernaum and what they wanted Him to do in His hometown. Almost as if to say, "The hometown boy should give special consideration to us."

8. Can you imagine the people in the congregation of your youth taking you to the brow of a cliff to throw you off? Imagine His mother in the crowd. Do you think she is reminded of Simeon's words, "a sword will pierce your own soul" (Lk. 2:35)?

9. It is interesting that Jesus speaks of Elijah being sent to the Gentile woman of Zarephath and provided for her during the famine and was not sent to the widows of Israel. Do you ever feel slighted when someone gives attention to another and not you? Have you ever been "filled with rage" in such a circumstance?

10. Well why didn't Jesus perform more miracles in Nazareth? Matthew says, "He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (13:58). Note that Matthew's account allows for the possibility that this is another occasion in the Nazareth synagogue.

Application:

1. If you had been a member of the congregation at Nazareth how do you suppose you would have responded to Jesus' reading? What questions would be raised

about who He was claiming to be? As you talked with others who raised questions what would you have said? What tensions would you have felt? If you were sick and would like to have been healed, but were not, how would you have responded? If a family member was sick and was not healed how would you have responded?

2. It is obvious that things are intense when they intend to throw Jesus off the cliff. When you experience such emotionally charged situations what are you more likely to do? Say nothing? Withdraw? Lead the way? Persuade others to your judgment? Be the voice of reason? Talk to the people involved? Stand aside to see what will happen? Help someone escape? Blame someone for creating the intensity?

3. If you were to interview (as a news reporter) the people in Nazareth and asked, "Who is this Jesus?" what kind of responses would you receive? What would you report to others as a result of your interview? What decision would you personally make?

4. Have you ever followed the crowd in rejecting Jesus?

5. How are you changed by having studied this account?