

CHAPTER 4

We left Christ newly baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. Now, in this chapter, we have,

I. A further preparation of him for his public ministry by his being tempted in the wilderness, of which we had the same account before in Matthew as we have here (v. 1-13).

II. His entrance upon his public work in Galilee (v. 14, 15), particularly,

1. At Nazareth, the city where he had been bred up (v. 16-30), which we had no account of before in Matthew.

2. At Capernaum, where, having preached to admiration (v. 31-32), he cast the devil out of a man that was possessed (v. 33-37), cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (v. 38, 39), and many others that were sick and possessed (v. 40, 41), and then went and did the same in other cities of Galilee (v. 42-44).

LUKE 4:1-13

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

The last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the *Son of Adam*, bespeak him to be the *seed of the woman*; being so, we have here, according to the promise, *breaking the serpent's head*, baffling and foiling the devil in all his temptations, who by one temptation had baffled and foiled our first parents. Thus, in the beginning of the war, he made reprisals upon him, and conquered the conqueror.

In this story of Christ's temptation, observe,

I. How he was *prepared* and *fitted* for it. He that designed him the trial furnished him accordingly; for though we know not what exercises may be before us, nor what encounters we may be reserved for, Christ did, and was provided accordingly; and God doth for us, and we hope will provide accordingly.

1. He was *full of the Holy Ghost*, who had *descended on him like a dove*. He had now greater measures of the gifts, graces, and comforts, of the Holy Ghost than ever before. Note, Those are well armed against the strongest temptations that are *full of the Holy Ghost*.
2. He was newly *returned from Jordan*, where he was baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God; and thus he was *prepared* for this combat. Note, When we have had the most comfortable communion with God, and the clearest discoveries of his favour to us, we may expect that Satan will set upon us (the richest ship is the pirate's prize), and that God will suffer him to do so, that the power of his grace may be manifested and magnified.
3. He was *led by the Spirit into the wilderness*, by the good Spirit, who led him as a champion into the field, to fight the enemy that he was sure to conquer. His being *led into the wilderness*,
 - (1.) *Gave* some advantage to the tempter; for there he had him alone, no friend with him, by whose prayers and advice he might be assisted in the hour of temptation. *Woe to him that is alone! He might give Satan advantage*, who knew his own strength; *we may not*, who know our own weakness.
 - (2.) He *gained* some advantage to himself, during his forty days' fasting in the wilderness. We may suppose that he was wholly taken up in proper meditation, and in consideration of his own undertaking, and the work he had before him; that he spent all his time in immediate, intimate, converse with his Father, as Moses in the mount, without any diversion, distraction, or interruption. Of all the days of Christ's life in the flesh, these seem to come nearest to the angelic perfection and the heavenly life, and this prepared him for Satan's assaults, and hereby he was fortified against them.
4. He continued fasting (v. 2): *In those days he did eat nothing*. This fast was altogether miraculous, like those of Moses and Elijah, and shows him to be, like them, a prophet *sent of God*. It is probable that it was in the wilderness of Horeb, the same wilderness in which Moses and Elijah fasted. As by retiring into the *wilderness* he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the *world*, so by his *fasting* he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the *body*; and Satan cannot easily take hold of those who are thus loosened from, and dead to, the *world* and the *flesh*. The more we

keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, the less advantage Satan has against us.

II. How he was assaulted by one temptation after another, and how he defeated the design of the tempter in every assault, and became more than a conqueror. During the *forty days*, he was *tempted of the devil* (v. 2), not by an inward suggestion, for the prince of this world had nothing in Christ by which to inject any such, but by outward solicitations, perhaps in the likeness of a serpent, as he tempted our first parents. But at the end of the forty days he came nearer to him, and did as it were close with him, when he perceived *that he was hungry*, v. 2. Probably, our Lord Jesus then began to look about among the trees, to see if he could find any thing that was eatable, whence the devil took occasion to make the following proposal to him.

1. He tempted him to *distrust his Father's* care of him, and to *set up for himself*, and shift for provision for himself in such a way as his Father had not appointed for him (v. 3): *If thou be the Son of God*, as the voice from heaven declared, *command this stone to be made bread*.

(1.) "I counsel thee to do it; for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long enough ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee." If we begin to think of being our own carvers, and of living by our own forecast, without depending upon divine providence, of getting wealth *by our might and the power of our hands*, we must look upon it as a temptation of Satan's, and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to think of an independence upon God.

(2.) "I *challenge* thee to do it, if thou canst; if thou dost not do it, I will say thou art *not the Son of God*; for John Baptist said lately, *God is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, which is the greater; thou therefore hast not the power of the *Son of God*, if thou dost not *of stones make bread* for thyself, when thou needest it, which is the less." Thus was God himself tempted in the wilderness: *Can he furnish a table? Can he give bread?* ^{PSALM} Psalm 78:19, 20.

Now,

[1.] Christ yielded not to the temptation; he would not *turn* that *stone* into *bread*; no, though he was hungry; *First*, Because he would not do what Satan bade him do, for that would have looked as if there had been indeed

a compact between him and the prince of the devils. Note, We must not do any thing that looks like *giving place to the devil*. Miracles were wrought for the confirming of faith, and the devil had no faith to be confirmed, and therefore he would not do it *for him*. He did his signs *in the presence of his disciples* (~~481B~~ John 20:30), and particularly the *beginning of his miracles*, turning water into wine, which he did, that his disciples might believe on him (~~481B~~ John 2:11); but here in the wilderness he had no disciples with him. *Secondly*, He wrought miracles for the ratification of his doctrine, and therefore till he began to *preach* he would not begin to work miracles. *Thirdly*, He would not work miracles *for himself* and his own supply, lest he should seem impatient of *hunger*, whereas he came not to *please himself*, but to *suffer grief*, and that grief among others; and because he would show that he *pleased not himself*, he would rather turn *water into wine*, for the credit and convenience of his friends, than *stones into bread*, for his own *necessary supply*. *Fourthly*, He would reserve the proof of his being the Son of God for hereafter, and would rather be upbraided by Satan with being weak, and not able to do it, than be persuaded by Satan to do that which it was fit for him to do; thus he was upbraided by his enemies as if he could not *save himself*, and *come down from the cross*, when he could have come down, but would not, because it was not fit that he should. *Fifthly*, He would not do any thing that looked like distrust of his Father, or *acting separately* from him, or any thing disagreeable to his present state. Being in all things *made like unto his brethren*, he would, like the other children of God, live in a dependence upon the divine Providence and promise, and trust him either to send him a supply into the wilderness or to *lead him to a city of habitation* where there was a supply, as he used to do (~~197B~~ Psalm 107:5-7), and in the mean time would *support* him, though he was hungry, as he had done these forty days past.

[2.] He returned a scripture-answer to it (v. 4): *It is written*. This is the first word recorded as spoken by Christ after his instalment in his prophetic office; and it is a quotation out of the Old Testament, to show that he came to assert and maintain the authority of the scripture as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself. And though he had the Spirit without measure, and had a doctrine of his own to preach and a religion to found, yet it agreed with Moses and the prophets, whose writings he therefore lays down as a rule to himself, and recommends to us as a reply to Satan and his temptations. The word of God is our *sword*, and faith in that word is our *shield*; we should therefore be *mighty in the scriptures*, and *go in that might*, go forth,

and go on, in our spiritual warfare, know *what is written*, for it is *for our learning*, for *our use*. The text of scripture he makes use of is quoted from ^{<888>}Deuteronomy 8:3: “*Man shall not live by bread alone. I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send manna for my nourishment, as he did for Israel; man can live by every word of God, by whatever God will appoint that he shall live by.*” How had Christ lived, lived comfortably, these last forty days? Not *by bread*, but by the *word of God*, by meditation upon that word, and communion with it, and with God in and by it; and in like manner he could *live yet*, though now he began to be *hungry*. God has many ways of providing for his people, without the ordinary means of subsistence; and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon, in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience as will enable a man even to *laugh at destruction and famine* (^{<882>}Job 5:22), or make *pulse and water* more nourishing than *all the portion of the king's meat* (^{<2012>}Daniel 1:12, 13), and enable his people to *rejoice in the Lord*, when the *fig-tree doth not blossom*, ^{<887>}Habakkuk 3:17. She was an active believer who said that she had made many a meal's meat of the promises when she wanted bread.

2. He tempted him to *accept from him* the kingdom, which, as the *Son of God*, he expected to receive from *his Father*, and to *do him homage* for, v. 5-7. This evangelist puts this temptation second, which Matthew had put last, and which, it should seem, was really the last; but Luke was full of it, as the blackest and most violent, and therefore hastened to it. In the devil's tempting of our first parents, he presented to them the forbidden fruit, first as *good for food*, and then as *pleasant to the eyes*; and they were overpowered by both these charms. Satan here first tempted Christ to turn the stones into bread, which would be good for food, and then showed him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, which were *pleasant to the eyes*; but in both these he overpowered Satan, and perhaps with an eye to that, Luke changes the order. Now observe,

(1.) How Satan *managed* this temptation, to prevail with Christ to become a tributary to him, and to receive his kingdom by delegation from him.

[1.] He gave him a prospect of *all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*, an airy representation of them, such as he thought most likely to strike the fancy, and seem a *real* prospect. To succeed the better, he *took him up* for this purpose *into a high mountain*; and, because we next after

the temptation find Christ on the other side Jordan, some think it probable that it was to the top of Pisgah that the devil took him, whence Moses has a sight of Canaan. That it was but a phantasm that the devil here presented our Saviour with, as the prince of the power of the air, is confirmed by that circumstance which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done *in a moment of time*; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must turn himself round, and take a view first of one part and then of another. Thus the devil thought to impose upon our Saviour with a fallacy — *a deceptio visus*; and, by making him believe that he could *show him all the kingdoms of the world*, would draw him into an opinion that he could *give him* all those kingdoms.

[2.] He boldly alleged that these kingdoms were *all delivered to him* that he had power to dispose of them and all their *glory*, and to give them to *whomsoever he would*, v. 6. Some think that herein he pretended to be an angel of light, and that, as one of the angels that was set over the kingdoms, he had out-bought, or out-fought, all the rest, and so was *entrusted* with the disposal of them all, and, in God's name, would give them to him, knowing they were designed for him; but clogged with this condition, that he should *fall down and worship him*, which a good angel would have been so far from demanding that he would not have admitted it, no, not upon showing much greater things than these, as appears, ^{<60>}Revelation 19:10; 22:9. But I rather take it that he claimed this power as Satan, and as *delivered to him* not by *the Lord*, but by the kings and people of these kingdoms, who gave their power and honour to the devil, ^{<40>}Ephesians 2:2. Hence he is called the *god of this world*, and the *prince of this world*. It was promised to the Son of God that he should have *the heathen for his inheritance*, ^{<90>}Psalms 2:8. “Why,” saith the devil, “the heathen are *mine*, are my subjects and votaries; but, however, they shall be thine, I will give them *thee*, upon condition that thou *worship me* for them, and say that they are the *rewards which I have given thee*, as others have done before *thee* (^{<30>}Hosea 2:12), and consent to have and *hold them by, from, and under, me.*”

[3.] He demanded of him homage and adoration: *If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine*, v. 7. *First*, He would have him worship him himself. Perhaps he does not mean so as never to worship God, but let him worship him in conjunction with God; for the devil knows, if he can but once come in a partner, he shall soon be sole proprietor. *Secondly*, He would indent with him, that when, according to the promise made to him, he had got

possession of the kingdoms of this world, he should make no alteration of religions in them, but permit and suffer the nations, as they had done hitherto, to *sacrifice to devils* (~~400~~1 Corinthians 10:20); that he should still keep up *demon-worship* in the world, and then let him take all the power and glory of the kingdoms if he pleased. Let who will take the wealth and grandeur of this earth, Satan has all he would have if he can but have men's hearts, and affections, and adorations, can but *work in the children of disobedience*; for then he effectually *devours them*.

(2.) How our Lord Jesus *triumphed* over this temptation. He gave it a peremptory repulse, rejected it with abhorrence (v. 8): “*Get thee behind me, Satan, I cannot bear the mention of it. What! worship the enemy of God whom I came to serve? and of man whom I came to save? No, I will never do it.*” Such a temptation as this was not to be *reasoned with*, but immediately refused; it was presently knocked on the head with one word, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and not only so, but him only, him and no other.* And therefore Christ will not worship Satan, nor, when he has the *kingdoms of the world delivered* to him by his Father, as he expects shortly to have, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. No, it shall be perfectly rooted out and abolished, wherever his gospel comes. He will make no composition with him. *Polytheism* and *idolatry* must go down, as Christ's kingdom gets up. Men must be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*, from the worship of devils to the worship of the only living and true God. This is the great divine law that Christ will re-establish among men, and by his holy religion reduce men to the obedience of, *That God only is to be served and worshipped*; and therefore whoever set up any creature as the object of religious worship, though it were a saint or an angel, or the virgin Mary herself, they directly thwart Christ's design, and relapse into heathenism.

3. He tempted him to be his own murderer, in a presumptuous confidence of his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. Observe,

(1.) What he designed in this temptation: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down*, v. 9.

[1.] He would have him seek for a new proof of his being the *Son of God*, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient, which would have been a dishonour to God, as if he had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it; and it would have argued a distrust of the

Spirit's dwelling in him, which was the great and most convincing proof to himself of his being the *Son of God*, ^{<3018>}Hebrews 1:8, 9.

[2.] He would have him seek a new method of proclaiming and publishing this to the world. The devil, in effect, suggests that it was in an *obscure corner* that he was attested to be the Son of God, among a company of ordinary people, who attended John's baptism, that his honours were proclaimed; but if he would now declare from *the pinnacle of the temple*, among all the great people who attend the temple-service, that he was the Son of God, and then, for proof of it, throw himself down unhurt, he would presently be received by every body as a messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have him seek honours of his devising (in contempt of those which God had put on him), and manifest himself in the temple at Jerusalem; whereas God designed he should be more manifest among John's penitents, to whom his doctrine would be more welcome than to the priests.

[3.] It is probable he had some hopes that, though he could not throw him down, to do him the least mischief, yet, if he would but throw himself down, the fall might be his death, and then he should have got him finely out of the way.

(2.) How he backed and enforced this temptation. He suggested, *It is written*, v. 10. Christ had quoted scripture against him; and he thought he would be quits with him, and would show that he could quote scripture as well as he. It has been usual with heretics and seducers to pervert scripture, and to press the sacred writings into the service of the worst of wickednesses. *He shall give his angels charge over thee*, if thou be his Son, and *in their hands they shall bear thee up*. And now that he was upon the pinnacle of the temple he might especially expect this ministration of angels; for, if he was the Son of God, the *temple* was the proper place for him to be in (^{<4226>}Luke 2:46); and, if any place under the sun had a guard of angels constantly, it must needs be that, ^{<4287>}Psalms 68:17. It is true, God has promised the protection of angels, to encourage us to trust him, not to tempt him; as far as the promise of God's presence with us, so far the promise of the angels' ministration goes, but no further: "They shall keep thee when thou goest on the ground, where thy way lies, but not if thou wilt presume to fly in the air."

(3.) How he was baffled and defeated in the temptation, v. 12. Christ quoted ^{<4286>}Deuteronomy 6:16, where it is said, *Thou shalt not tempt the*

Lord thy God, by desiring a sign for the proof of divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient; for so Israel did, when they *tempted God in the wilderness*, saying, *He gave us water out of the rock; but can he give flesh also?* This Christ would be guilty of if he should say, “He did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the *greater*; but can he also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the *less*?”

III. What was the result and issue of this combat, v. 13. Our victorious Redeemer kept his ground, and came off a conqueror, not for himself only, but for us also.

1. The devil emptied his quiver: *He ended all the temptation*. Christ gave him opportunity to say and do all he could against him; he let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. Did Christ suffer, being tempted, till all the temptation was ended? And must not we expect also to pass all our trials, to go through the *hour of temptation* assigned us?

2. He then quitted the field: *He departed from him*. He saw it was to no purpose to attack him; he had *nothing in him* for his fiery darts to fasten upon; he had no blind side, no weak or unguarded part in his wall, and therefore Satan gave up the cause. Note, If we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

3. Yet he continued his malice against him, and departed with a resolution to attack him again; he departed but *for a season*, *achri kairou* — *till a season*, or till the season when he was again to be let loose upon him, not as a *tempter*, to draw him to *sin*, and so to strike at *his head*, which was what he now aimed at and was wholly defeated in; but as a *persecutor*, to bring him to *suffer* by Judas and the other wicked instruments whom he employed, and so to *bruise his heel*, which it was told him (^{<0085>}Genesis 3:15) he should have to do, and would do, though it would be the breaking of *his own head*. He *departed now* till that season came which Christ calls the *power of darkness* (^{<0253>}Luke 22:53), and when the prince of this world would again *come*, ^{<0430>}John 14:30.

CHRIST IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF NAZARETH

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the good Spirit; and, having defended himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act *offensively*, and to make those attacks upon him, by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe,

I. What is here said in general of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with *in Galilee*, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem; it was a part of Christ's humiliation that he began his ministry there.

But,

1. Thither he came *in the power of the Spirit*. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetic office strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself.

2. There he *taught in their synagogues*, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of devotion, to read, expound, and apply, the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequent since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring.

3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation. *A fame of him went through all that region* (v. 14), and it was a good fame; for (v. 15) he was *glorified of all*. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all *glorified* him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

II. Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up; and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told how he *preached* there, and how he was *persecuted*.

1. How he preached there. In that observe,

(1.) The opportunity he had for it: *He came to Nazareth* when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach,

[1.] In the *synagogue*, the proper place, where it had been *his custom* to attend when he was a private person, v. 16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But, now that he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisherman would cast his net.

[2.] On the sabbath day, the proper time which the pious Jews spent, not in a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets on the *new moons* and the *sabbaths*. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(2.) The call he had to it.

[1.] He *stood up to read*. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ *preaching* in other synagogues, but never *reading*, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member. Now he offered his service as he had perhaps often done; he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, ^{<4435>}Acts 13:15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very proper work to be done in religious assemblies; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it.

[2.] The *book of the prophet Esaias* was delivered to him, either by the ruler of the synagogue or by the minister mentioned (v. 20), so that he was no intruder, but duly authorized *pro hac vice* — *on this occasion*. The second lesson for *that* day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

(3.) The text he preached upon. He *stood up to read*, to teach us reverence in *reading* and *hearing* the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law, *all the people stood up* (^{<4485>}Nehemiah 8:5); so did Christ here, when he read in the book of the prophets. Now the book being *delivered to him*,

[1.] He *opened* it. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner *shut up* till Christ opened them, ^{<291>}Isaiah 29:11. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to take the book, and open the seals; for he can open, not the book only, but the understanding.*

[2.] He *found* the place which was appointed to be read *that day* in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text. Now his text was taken out of ^{<291>}Isaiah 61:1, 2, which is here quoted at large, v. 18, 19. There was a providence in it that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks so very plainly of the Messiah, that they might be left inexcusable who *knew him not*, though they heard *the voices of the prophets read every sabbath day*, which bore witness of him, ^{<417>}Acts 13:27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe,

First, How he was qualified for the work: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, ^{<434>}John 3:34. He now came *in the power of the Spirit*, v. 14.

Secondly, How he was commissioned: *Because he had anointed me, and sent me*. His extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission; his being *anointed* signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking and called to it. Those whom God *appoints* to any service he *anoints* for it: "Because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me."

Thirdly, What his work was. He was qualified and commissioned,

1. To be a great *prophet*. He was *anointed to preach*; that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe,

(1.) To *whom* he was to preach: to the *poor*; to those that were *poor in the world*, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to undertake the teaching of and spoke of with contempt; to those that were *poor in spirit*, to the meek and humble, and to those that were truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, ^{<415>}Matthew 11:5.

(2.) *What* he was to *preach*. In general, he must preach *the gospel*. He is sent *euangelizesthai* — to *evangelize* them; not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; to bring it, not only to their

ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it. Three things he is to preach: —

[1.] *Deliverance to the captives*, The gospel is a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. By the merit of Christ sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thraldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of that are willing to make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

[2.] *Recovering of sight to the blind*. He came not only by the word of his gospel to bring *light* to them that sat *in the dark*, but by the power of his grace to give sight to them that were *blind*; not only the Gentile world, but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in *bondage*, but in *blindness*, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came to tell us that he has *eye-salve* for us, which we may have for the asking; that, if our prayer be, *Lord, that our eyes may be opened*, his answer shall be, *Receive your sight*.

[3.] *The acceptable year of the Lord*, v. 19. He came to let the world know that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to *accept* of them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him; that there is now a time of *good will toward men*. It alludes to the year of *release*, or that of *jubilee*, which was an *acceptable year* to servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped; and to those who had mortgaged their lands, for then they returned to them again. Christ came to sound the *jubilee-trumpet*; and blessed were they that heard *the joyful sound*, ^{<1895>}Psalm 89:15. It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation.

2. Christ came to be a great *Physician*; for he was sent to *heal the broken-hearted*, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those that were troubled and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them, and to bring them to rest who were weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great *Redeemer*. He not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon (*Whoever will, may go up*), but he sets at liberty them that are bruised; he doth by his Spirit

incline and *enable* them to make use of the liberty granted, as then none did but those *whose spirit God stirred up*, ^{<305>}Ezra 1:5. He came in God's name to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could but *proclaim liberty*, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had *power on earth to forgive sins*, came to *set at liberty*; and therefore this clause is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according to a liberty the Jew allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture, in their reading, for the explication of the text, Christ added it from ^{<286>}Isaiah 58:6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable year to let *the oppressed go free*, where the phrase the Septuagint uses is the same with this here.

(4.) Here is Christ's *application* of this text to himself (v. 21): When he had read it, he *rolled up the book*, and gave it again *to the minister, or clerk*, that attended, and *sat down*, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers; he *sat daily in the temple, teaching*, ^{<485>}Matthew 26:55. Now he *began* his discourse thus, "*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*. This, which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history." It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry; *now*, in the report they heard of his preaching and miracles in other places; *now*, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning *the kingdom of heaven at hand*; that it was preaching liberty, and sight, and healing, and all the blessings of *the acceptable year of the Lord*. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the *beginning* of; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal: *This day is this scripture fulfilled*. Note,

[1.] All the scriptures of the Old Testament that were to be fulfilled in the Messiah had their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was *he that should come*.

[2.] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the *fulfilling of the scriptures*. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God to compare them one with another.

(5.) Here is the *attention* and *admiration* of the auditors.

[1.] Their *attention* (v. 20): *The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue* (and, probably, there were a great many) *were fastened on him*, big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister by whom God is speaking to us; for, as the eye effects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering, or fixed, as that is. Or, rather, let us learn hence to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. *What saith my Lord unto his servants?*

[2.] Their *admiration* (v. 22): *They all bore him witness* that he spoke admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth*; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not *believe in him*. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching may yet be themselves not true Christians. Observe, *First*, What it was they admired: *The gracious words which proceedeth out of his mouth*. The *words of grace*; good words, and spoken in a winning melting way. Note, Christ's words are *words of grace*, for, grace being *poured into his lips* (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 45:2), words of grace poured from them. And these words of grace are to be *wondered at*; Christ's name was Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such *words of grace* to such graceless wretches as we are. *Secondly*, What it was that increased their wonder and that was the consideration of his original: *They said, Is not this Joseph's son*, and therefore his extraction mean and his education mean? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his *gracious words*, concluding he must needs be *taught of God*, for they knew no one else had taught him; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing *really* admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the *Son of Joseph*. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

(6.) Christ's anticipating an objection which he knew to be in the minds of many of his hearers. Observe,

[1.] What the objection was (v. 23): *"You will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself*. Because you know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neighbour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I

have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity." Most of Christ's miracles were *cures*; — "Now why should not the sick in thine own city be *healed* as well as those in other cities?" They were designed to cure people of their unbelief; — "Now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others? *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum*, that has been so much talked of, *do here also in thine own country.*" They were pleased with *Christ's gracious words*, only because they hoped they were but the introduction to some *wondrous works* of his. They wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other; and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other? And why should not his neighbours and acquaintances have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other?

[2.] How he answers this objection against the course he took.

First, By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his headquarters (v. 24), because it generally holds true *that no prophet is accepted in his own country*, at least not so well, nor with such probability of doing good, as in some other country; experience seals this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own country-men, that have known their extraction and education, have been fit to *receive them*. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to; and they will scarcely be duly honoured as *prophets* who were well known when they were in the rank of *private men*. That is most esteemed that is *far-fetched* and *dear-bought*, above what is *home-bred*, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their *superior* whom awhile ago they took to be every way their *inferior*. For this reason, Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary, at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners

rather than among their own countrymen, and that, no doubt, by divine direction.

1. Elijah maintained a *widow of Sarepta*, a *city of Sidon*, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a *famine in the land*, v. 25, 26. The story we have ^{<117>}1 Kings 17:9, etc. It is said there that the heaven was shut up *three years and six months*; whereas it is said, ^{<118>}1 Kings 18:1, that *in the third year Elijah* showed himself to Ahab, and there was *rain*; but that was not the third year of the drought, but the third year of Elijah's sojourning with the widow of Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a *Father of the fatherless*, and a *Judge of the widows*, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel (v. 27); *Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus*, four particularly, that brought the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elisha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accomplishment of his prophecy too; see ^{<119>}2 Kings 7:1, 3, etc. And yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them, no not for a reward of their service, and the good tidings they brought, but only the Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply himself to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Israel. And here he mentions both these instances, to show that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respect, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazarenes to Christ, *Physician, heal thyself*. Nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his townsmen, yet among Israelites, whereas these great prophets wrought theirs among Gentiles. The examples of the saints, though they will not make a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptionous people.

2. How he was *persecuted* at Nazareth.

(1.) That which provoked them was his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha showed to the Gentiles: *When they heard these things, they were filled with wrath* (v. 28), they were *all so*; a great change since v. 22, when they *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out*

of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with those gracious words of Christ which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but those only *pleased the ear*, and went no further, and therefore these *grated on the ear*, and irritated their corruptions. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, ~~(Acts 22:21)~~ Acts 22:21. Their pious ancestors pleased themselves with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church (witness many of David's psalms and Isaiah's prophecies); but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in.

(2.) They were provoked to that degree that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the usage he met with when he *came to his own*, and they *received him not*.

[1.] They *rose up* in a tumultuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over.

[2.] They *thrust him out of the city*, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the offscouring of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them! But this was the day of his patience.

[3.] They *led him to the brow of the hill*, with a purpose to *throw him down headlong*, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been, — though they had heard such a fame of him and had but just now themselves *admired his gracious words*, — though in justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hearing and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Sometimes they were ready to stone him for the *good works* he did (~~(John 10:32)~~ John 10:32), here for not doing

the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence sprung up.

(3.) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come: He *passed through the midst of them* unhurt. Either he blinded their eyes, as God did those of the Sodomites and Syrians, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun; his hour was not yet come, when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They *drove* him from them, and he *went his way*. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they *would not*, and therefore their house is *left to them desolate*. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was such a wicked, rude place, and so *unkind* to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now, though they *received him not*, there were those that did.

LUKE 4:31-44

THE EXPULSION OF A DEMON

When Christ was expelled Nazareth, he came to Capernaum, another city of Galilee. The account we have in these verses of his preaching and miracles there we had before, ~~☞~~ Mark 1:21, etc. Observe,

I. His preaching: *He taught them on the sabbath days*, v. 31. In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we *worship God*, and it is a proper work for *sabbath days*. Christ's preaching much affected the people (v. 32); they were *astonished at his doctrine*, there was weight in every word he said, and admirable discoveries were made to them by it. The doctrine itself was astonishing, and not only as it came from one that had not had a liberal education. *His word was with power*; there was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the conscience of men. The doctrine Paul preached hereby proved itself to be of God, that it came *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*.

II. His miracles. Of these we have here,

1. Two particularly specified, showing Christ to be,

(1.) A *controller* and *conqueror* of *Satan*, in the world of mankind, and in the souls of people, by his power to cast him out of the bodies of those he had taken possession of; for *for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

Observe,

[1.] The devil is an *unclean spirit*, his nature directly contrary to that of the pure and *holy* God, and degenerated from what it was at first.

[2.] This unclean spirit works in the children of men; in the souls of many, as then in men's bodies.

[3.] It is possible that those who are very much under the power and working of Satan may yet be found *in the synagogue*, among the worshippers of God.

[4.] Even the devils *know and believe* that *Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God*, is sent of God, and is a *Holy One*.

[5.] They believe and *tremble*. This unclean spirit *cried out with a loud voice*, under a *certain fearful looking for of judgment*, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights.

[6.] The devils have *nothing to do with Jesus Christ*, nor desire to have any thing to do with him; for he took not on him the nature of angels.

[7.] Christ has the devil under check: *He rebuked him*, saying, *Hold thy peace*; and this word he spoke *with power*; *phimotheti* — *Be muzzled*, Christ did not only enjoin him silence, but stopped his mouth, and forced him to be silent against his will.

[8.] In the breaking of Satan's power, both the enemy that is conquered shows his malice, and Christ, the conqueror, shows his over-ruling grace. Here, *First*, The devil showed what he would have done, when he *threw the man in the midst*, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. But, *Secondly*, Christ showed what a power he had over him, in that he not only forced him to leave him, but to leave him without so much as *hurting* him, without giving him a parting blow, a parting gripe. Whom Satan cannot *destroy*, he will do all the *hurt* he can to; but this is a

comfort, he can harm them no further than Christ permits; nay, he shall not do them any real harm. He *came out*, and *hurt him not*; that is, the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage that all that were present thought he had torn him to pieces.

[9.] Christ's power over devils was universally acknowledged and adored, v. 36. No one doubted the truth of the miracle; it was evident beyond contradiction, nor was any thing suggested to diminish the glory of it, for they were *all amazed, saying, What a word is this!* They that pretended to cast out devils did it with abundance of charms and spells, to pacify the devil, and lull him asleep, as it were; but Christ commanded them *with authority and power*, which they could not gainsay or resist. Even the *prince of the power of the air* is his vassal, and trembles before him. [10.] This, as much as any thing, gained Christ a reputation, and spread his fame. This instance of his power, which many now-a-days make light of, was then, by them that were eye-witnesses of it (and those no fools either, but men of penetration), magnified, and was looked upon as greatly magnifying him (v. 37); upon the account of this, *the fame of him went out*, more than ever, *into every place of the country round about*. Our Lord Jesus, when he set out at first in his public ministry, was greatly talked of, more than afterwards, when people's admiration wore off with the novelty of the thing.

(2.) Christ showed himself to be *a healer of diseases*. In the former, he struck at the root of man's misery, which was Satan's enmity, the origin of all the mischief: in this, he strikes at one of the most spreading branches of it, one of the most common calamities of human life, and that is bodily diseases, which came in with sin, are the most common and sensible corrections for it in this life, and contribute as much as any thing towards the making of our few days *full of trouble*. These our Lord Jesus came to take away the sting of, and, as an indication of that intention, when he was on earth, chose to confirm his doctrine by such miracles, mostly, as took away the diseases themselves. Of all bodily diseases none are more common or fatal to grown people than *fevers*; these come suddenly, and suddenly cut off the number of men's months in the midst; they are sometimes *epidemical*, and *slay their thousands* in a little time. Now here we have Christ's curing a fever with a word's speaking; the place was in Simon's house, his patient was Simon's wife's mother, v. 38, 39. Observe,

[1.] Christ is a guest that will pay well for his entertainment; those that bid him welcome into their hearts and houses shall be no losers by him; he comes with healing.

[2.] Even families that Christ visits may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his *distinguishing favours* are liable to the *common calamities* of this life. Simon's wife's mother was *ill of a fever*. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*.

[3.] Even good people may sometimes be exercised with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others: She was *taken with a great fever*, very acute, and high, and threatening; perhaps it seized her head, and made her delirious. The most gentle fevers may by degrees prove dangerous; but this was at first *a great fever*.

[4.] No age can exempt from diseases. It is probable that Peter's mother-in-law was *in years*, and yet in a *fever*.

[5.] When our relations are sick, we ought to apply ourselves to Christ, by faith and prayer, on their account: *They besought him for her*; and there is a particular promise that the prayer of faith shall benefit the sick.

[6.] Christ has a tender concern for his people when they are in sickness and distress: *He stood over her*, as one concerned for her, and compassionating her case.

[7.] Christ had, and still has, a sovereign power over bodily diseases: *He rebuked the fever*, and with a word's speaking commanded it away, and *it left her*. He saith to diseases, *Go*, and they go; *Come*, and they come; and can still *rebuke fevers*, even great fevers.

[8.] This proves Christ's cures to be miraculous, that they were done in an instant: *Immediately she arose*.

[9.] Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, he designs and expects that it should be a new life indeed, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. If distempers be rebuked, and we arise from a bed of sickness, we must set ourselves to minister to Jesus Christ. [10.] Those that minister to Christ must be ready to minister to all that are his for his sake: She *ministered to them*, not only to *him* that had cured her, but to them that had *besought him for her*. We must study to be grateful to those that have prayed for us.

2. A general account given by wholesale of many other miracles of the same kind, which Christ did.

(1.) He *cured many that were diseased*, even all without exception that made their application to him, and it was *when the sun was setting* (v. 40); in the evening of that sabbath day which he had spent in the synagogue. Note, It is good to do a full sabbath day's work, to abound in the work of the day, in some good work or other, even till sun-set; as those that call the sabbath, and the business of it, *a delight*. Observe, He cured *all that were sick*, poor as well as rich, and though they were sick of *divers diseases*; so that there was no room to suspect that he had only a specific for some one disease. He had a remedy for every malady. The sign he used in healing was *laying his hands* on the sick; not lifting up his hands for them, for he healed as having authority. He healed by his own power. And thus he would put honour upon that sign which was afterwards used in conferring the Holy Ghost.

(2.) He cast the devil out of many that were possessed, v. 41. Confessions were extorted from the demoniacs. They said, *Thou art Christ the Son of God*, but they said it *crying* with rage and indignation; it was a confession upon the rack, and therefore was not admitted in evidence. Christ *rebuked them*, and did not *suffer them to say that they knew him to be the Christ*, that it might appear, beyond all contradiction, that he had obtained a conquest over them, and not made a compact with them.

3. Here is his removal from Capernaum, v. 42, 43.

(1.) He *retired* for awhile into a place of *solitude*. It was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; not only because a *little served him*, but because he was *content with a little*, and never indulged himself in ease; but, *when it was day*, he *went into a desert place*, not to live constantly like a hermit, but to be sometimes *alone with God*, as even those should be, and contrive to be, that are most engaged in public work, or else their work will go on but poorly, and they will find themselves never *less alone* than when *thus alone*.

(2.) He *returned* again to the places of *concourse* and to the work he had to do there. Though a *desert place* may be a convenient *retreat*, yet it is not a *convenient residence*, because we were not sent into this world to *live to ourselves*, no, not to the *best part* of ourselves only, but to glorify God and do good in our generation.

[1.] He was earnestly solicited to stay at Capernaum. *The people* were exceedingly fond of him; I doubt, more because he had healed their sick than because he had preached repentance to them. *They sought him*, enquired which way he went; and, though it was in a *desert place*, they *came unto him*. A desert is no desert if we be *with Christ* there. They *detained him that he should not depart from them*, so that if he would go it should not be for want of invitation. His old neighbours at Nazareth had driven him from them, but his new acquaintances at Capernaum were very importunate for his continuance with them. Note, It ought not to discourage the ministers of Christ that some reject them, for they will meet with others that will welcome them and their message.

[2.] He chose rather to *diffuse* the light of his gospel to *many* places than to fix it to *one*, that no one might pretend to be a *mother-church* to the rest. Though he was welcome at Capernaum, and had done abundance of good there, yet he is *sent to preach the gospel to other cities also*; and Capernaum must not insist upon his stay there. They that enjoy the benefit of the gospel must be willing that others also should share in that benefit, and not covet the *monopoly* of it; and those ministers who are not *driven* from one place may yet be *drawn* to another by a prospect of greater usefulness. Christ, though he preached not in vain in the synagogue at Capernaum, yet would not be tied to that, but *preached in the synagogues of Galilee*, v. 44. *Bonum est sui diffusivum* — *What is good is self-diffusive*. It is well for us that our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but, wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them: and even in *Galilee of the Gentiles* his special presence is in the Christian synagogues.