

Nazareth Rejects Its Prophet & Messiah, Mt 13:54-57; Jesus Uses Old Testament Examples to Document Their Blindness: Elijah & the Widow, Lk 4:24-26; Elisha & Naaman, 2 Kgs 5:15-19a

- 10) Since He was free of sin it would not be accurate to say that the Lord became frustrated over the rejection of Himself and His message in His home province. But one of the reasons He was rejected is discussed by Him in all four of the Gospels.

Matthew 13:54 - Jesus came to His hometown [Nazareth] and began to teach the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers?"

v. 55 - "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't His mother named Mary? And aren't His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas?"

v. 56 - "And aren't all His sisters here with us? Where did He get all this?"

v.57 - And they took offense at Him [**snobbery**]. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own house." And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

- 11) This exchange is repeated in Mark 6:1-6 and Luke 4:22-24 and referenced in John 4:44. The exchange in Luke 4 resulted in His audience concluding that He was a false prophet followed by an attempted execution.

Luke 4:22 - All [**those gathered in the synagogue**] were speaking well of Him, and were amazed at the gracious words coming out of His mouth. They said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

v. 23 - Jesus said to them, "No doubt you will quote to Me the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself!" and say, "What we have heard that you did in Capernaum, do here in your hometown too."

The proverb "Physician, heal yourself," is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, (2:454): "doctors sometimes cannot do for themselves what they profess to be able to do for others."

The Lord perceives what the people are thinking: a mocking request for empirical evidence that Jesus is Messiah by demanding that he knock out some of His reported miracles while in His Own hometown. He continues by answering their query:

Luke 4:24 - And He added, "I am telling you the truth, no prophet [**the Lord emphasizes that He is not only Messiah, He is also a prophet**] is acceptable in his hometown.

v. 25 - "But in truth I tell you [**He recites evidence of Israel's rejection of truth throughout its history**] there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's days, when the sky was shut up for three and a half years and there was great famine over the land.

v. 26 - "Yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to a woman who was a widow at Zarephath \zar'-e-fath\ in Sidon \sī'-don\."

- 12) The reference to Elijah and the widow of Zarephath is the first of two examples the Lord gives that infuriate His audience.

- 13) The reign of Ahab and Jezebel over the Northern Kingdom introduced idolatry into the culture of Israel including Jezebel influencing Ahab to execute the prophets of Jehovah. This brought divine discipline upon the nation.
- 14) The discipline came in the form of a drought which Elijah prophesied to King Ahab in 1 Kings 17:1, after which the Lord instructed Elijah to head east and encamp in the Kereth Valley in Transjordan and later in the Phoenician village of Zarephath.
- 15) It was at Zarephath that Elijah found refuge in the home of a certain Phoenician widow and her young son. The Lord's point is that prophets are often found unwelcomed in their hometowns.
- 14) This incident also indicates that where the Jews have rejected Him as Messiah, Gentiles will not. This is also the point made by His next example:

Luke 4:27 - And there were many lepers [עֲרָבִים *sara*]: those with a chronic skin disease (See: *TDOT*, 12:468-74); Gk: λέπρα, *lepra*] in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, yet none of them was cleansed except Naaman \nā'-a-man\ the Syrian.

- 15) Naaman was commander of the Syrian army and was advised by his wife's Israeli servant girl that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure his illness.
- 16) The prophet was Elisha who instructed Naaman to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River. Initially reluctant, Naaman reconsidered, followed Elisha's directions, and was healed miraculously. The miracle was proof to Naaman that the God of Israel was superior to the false gods of Syria.
- 17) The commander was so impressed by the miracle that he went to Elisha with the intent of paying him for being healed: ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes (2 Kings 5:5). Elishah's response is recorded in:

2 Kings 5:15 - Naaman and his entire entourage returned to the prophet. Naaman came and stood before Elisha. He said, "For sure I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. Now, please accept a gift from your servant."

- 18) What Elisha says is a total grace response that indicates his understanding that the miracle was not of his doing but that of the Lord's:

2 Kings 5:16 - But Elisha replied, "As certainly as the Lord lives (whom I serve), I will take nothing from you." Naaman insisted that he take it, but he refused.

- 19) The meaning of what Naaman requests next and Elisha's response is not apparent from the translation but once understood contributes to our study of the biblical meaning of the word peace:

2 Kings 5:17 - Naaman said, "If not, then please give your servant a load of dirt, enough for a pair of mules to carry, for your servant will never again offer a burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but only to the Lord.

v. 18 - “May the Lord forgive your servant for this: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon \rim'-on\ to worship, and he leans on my arm and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”

v. 19a - Elisha said to him, “Go in peace [שָׁלוֹם *shalom*].”