Sunday School: 23 Jan 2022: Luke 4:16-30 (Isaiah 61)

The Bible is a special book because it is 'the Word of God'. In it God tells us everything we need to know about him, whether we live in China or the USA or SA. God began to write it thousands of years ago when people were nomads living in tents. But it is still God's word for all people even though we live in big cities and can launch massive telescopes into space.

Now most old books get outdated, but God planned it so that the Bible would be as useful today as it ever was. It seems to me that one of the ways God did this was through a kind of secret code. This was not to keep his message 'secret' but because he wanted to make sure that the right message reached the right people at the right time.

So hidden inside the messages which were for the people living when the words were written down were other messages. The book of Isaiah for instance contains many examples of this. He wrote 700 years before Jesus was born, but lots of his words contain information and ideas about what would happen when Jesus would come to earth. No-one alive then however dreamt that God would come as a baby - they didn't get that secret.

But when Jesus was on earth, many of the codes were 'cracked' (solved) for the people of his time as Jesus taught. For example, Luke tells us about when the leaders in the synagogue in Nazareth asked Jesus to be their teacher for that day. Imagine the buzz in that synagogue! Many of the people there knew Jesus because he had grown up in Nazareth. I imagine them listening quietly as he read the familiar words from the scroll of Isaiah, nodding as he pronounced the words correctly and feeling prouder and prouder all the time.

After reading Jesus sat down in the teaching chair and they waited expectantly for him to discuss what he had read, probably expecting him to explain why the verses he had read referred to the Messiah.

Jesus got straight to the point. "You have heard those words often before, but today they are being fulfilled – Today the secret meaning behind them is being made clear." He explained that he was filled with God's Spirit. He wasn't just explaining that those verses were about the Messiah; he was claiming to *be* the Messiah. The congregation sat up! They hadn't expected this! Jesus couldn't be the Messiah! He was just Joseph's son. And the more he spoke, the crosser they got. Eventually they got so mad, they tried to stone him to death but miraculously he moved through the crowd and escaped.

The people in Nazareth couldn't stop the truth coming out. Jesus was the Messiah. And, over the next three years, he would broadcast the secret contained messages in the words Isaiah had heard from God.