

722 “Who Is This Man?”  
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*God’s Answers to Life’s Questions*

Imagine going back to your home town, where you had lived most of your life, and being rejected by your family and friends. Imagine trying to do good but finding people offended. Jesus knew what it meant to be rejected by the people he knew best. Stay with us as we look into this fascinating Bible story. Today we’re asking the question, “Who Is This Man?” Our question arises from a reading of Matthew 13:53-58: And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.” And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”

Few things in life that hurt more than rejection. If a stranger rejects you, it doesn’t mean much; but if your family and friends reject you, it can pierce your soul. Jesus grew up in Nazareth and spent the first 30 years of his life there. He worshiped in the synagogue there, went to school and learned to read there, and worked as a carpenter along with his father there. He was no stranger to the people of Nazareth, but they did not know how to deal with what Jesus had become. Now at this point Jesus was coming home, to the south side of the mountain, the place where he spent his first 30 years of life. As a village, Nazareth was not all that big. His family would have been well known. Jesus loved all men, but these were the people he had known his whole life, the people who meant much to him. But sometimes familiarity breeds contempt.

This was his second trip to his hometown. He came back because he cared for his people. On his first evangelistic trip to his hometown, Jesus had a very difficult time. Luke 4:16 says: And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

Many years ago a man whom I was teaching threatened to call the police on me, but no one ever threatened my life. The people of Nazareth had heard the stories of his healings in Capernaum and perhaps had heard about his turning the water into wine at nearby Cana of Galilee. But when he made the claim that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, they began to wonder if he were going to work some miracles. If he could give sight to the blind and free the oppressed, why couldn’t he do it at home? When he gave a couple of examples of God blessing people outside of Israel but not blessing the Israelites themselves, they could hardly stand it. They drove him out of town and took him to the brow of the hill to throw him down the cliff. Jesus knew this spot well. They wanted to kill him. The only miracle they saw that day, however, was Jesus passing through their midst and leaving town.

Even more hurtful to Jesus than the way his hometown treated him, however, was the way his own family treated him. John 7:5 says, “For not even His brothers were believing in Him.” Jesus had left his hometown, Nazareth, and made his home in Capernaum about twenty miles away. Mark 3:20-21 says: Then he went home (Capernaum), and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.” Can you imagine your family thinking that you are crazy? That’s what Jesus’ own family thought about him. Now at a later time they became believers, but at this point they were ashamed of the notoriety he was bringing the family. They figured anyone who thought he was the Messiah and was the Son of God had to be out of his mind. They hoped to take him home and get him out of the public eye. They didn’t know who He really was. Matthew tells us in chapter 12, verses 46-50: While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Their visit may have prompted Jesus to go back home. Nazareth was about twenty miles southwest of Capernaum. The people of Nazareth were about to receive a second chance to believe; unfortunately, they again rejected the Lord. Matthew’s brief story of this visit to Nazareth begins with their astonishment. Matthew 13:54 says: and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” Jesus had grown up going to this synagogue, but Matthew calls it “their” synagogue. Jesus could speak to them, but he couldn’t get through to them with his message. They would not even speak his name. “Where did this man (the King James Version uses the phrase “this fellow”) get this wisdom and these mighty works?” Of course, Jesus received his power and wisdom from God, but they weren’t willing to admit that.

The synagogue was the center of the town, controlling civic and social as well as religious life. It seemed that everyone would come to the synagogue, for this was the focal point of Jewish life. This was really a key place for Jesus to meet the people—much like the city gate in the Old Testament. The people *were amazed* at Jesus’ wisdom, teaching ability, and miraculous powers. The people were so amazed that it was as if they had been struck with a blow—stunned. They were flabbergasted. They knew Jesus’ miracles were supernatural, but they wondered about their source. The options were either God or Satan. They simply couldn’t accept that Jesus was from

the God of heaven. So they took offense at him. Matthew 13:55-57 says: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."

To me it is interesting they could name his father and mother, they could name his four brothers, but they could not bring themselves to mention his name. To them he is "this man." Jesus was a carpenter. The word *Tekton* can mean "carpenter"—one who works with wood—or perhaps even "builder," in a time and place when most homes were made of mud brick. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 88.8, c. A.D. 150) says Jesus was a maker of plows and yokes. The fact that he is called "*the carpenter's son*" suggests there was only one in town. The residents of Jesus' hometown had known Jesus since he was a young child and knew his family. They could call their names. But they could not bring themselves to believe in his message. They were too close to the situation. Jesus had come to them as a prophet, one who challenged them to respond to unpopular spiritual truth. They did not listen to the timeless message because they could not see beyond the man. Jesus had never been formally trained as a rabbi. For the years before that, he had been at home, learning the trade of carpentry from his father.

They thought that surely One so "ordinary" could not be the promised Messiah. People often reject one of their own, if that person becomes highly successful. Jesus was not the first prophet to be rejected *in his own country*. Jeremiah experienced rejection, even by members of his own family. In Jeremiah 12:6, the Lord says to Jeremiah, "For even your brothers and the household of your father, Even they have dealt treacherously with you, Even they have cried aloud after you. Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you." People can deceive themselves. Even when something is obvious, people can deceive themselves. One of the most frustrating conversations in theatrical history is recorded by *Theatre Arts* magazine: A subscriber dialed "Information" for the magazine's number. "Sorry," drawled the lady, "but there is nobody listed by the name of 'Theodore Arts.'" The subscriber insisted, "It's not a person; it's a publication. I want *Theatre Arts*." The operator's voice got a little louder. She repeated, "I told you, we have no listing for Theodore Arts." By now the subscriber was hollering, "Lady, the word is Theatre: T-H-E-A-T-R-E!" The operator came back with crushing finality: "That—is not the way to spell Theodore." Sometimes something so clear can be muddied up by bias and prejudice.

Their astonishment turned to offense, and their offense turned into unbelief. Matthew 13:58 says, "And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Mark said in a parallel passage in Mark 6:5-6, "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief." Jesus marveled that they could not bring themselves to believe in Him. Consequently,

most of the sick went unhealed. This situation was not "O ye of little faith"; this was complete denial, complete rejection by the people he had known his whole life.

Jesus marveled at their unbelief, but he must also have felt much pain. He may have thought that he could depend on his family and friends. He knew them so well. Have you ever considered that Jesus also knows you that intimately? He knows all about you. Jesus loves every soul. He wants you to be his disciple, to follow Him. He wants to save you from sin and from the punishment of sin. He shed his blood for you. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, when the people rejected him. He said in Matthew 23:37-38, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate." He will weep over you too, if you reject Him. He wants to see you live in righteousness not rebellion. Don't stumble over Jesus; serve Him! He is everything he claims to be. Give your life to him.

It's easy for us to deceive ourselves about what we know is true. Peter was sure of his commitment until he was faced with danger. In Matthew 26:33-35 Peter said, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same. Well, you know what happened! Though Peter was so sure of himself, he denied the Lord three times, just as Jesus predicted. In John 20:25 the Bible says: So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he [Thomas] said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Thomas had already made up his mind in spite of the evidence and testimony of the other disciples. People sometimes won't listen to God, because they are too busy thinking they already know what is true. Jesus showed himself to Thomas, and Thomas learned Jesus really had arisen. What about you? Do you believe?

Are you willing to listen to God's word and what it says about sin and salvation? Don't let pride keep you from hearing God's message. What you think is true may not be true at all. Don't let Satan steal God's word from your heart. Don't let some preconceived notion blind you to the truth. Don't let some other person's prejudice keep you from studying the Bible for yourself. Study God's word and you will see that Jesus is what he claimed to be, the Lord, the Son of God, and the Christ. Trust Him and love Him. He can make a difference in your life. Turn away from every sin and make up your mind to follow Him. Confess your faith in him to all, and be baptized into Christ. When you are baptized (immersed in water), the Lord washes away your sins and adds you to His church. At that time you become a child of God and live in the grace of God. There is nothing that could be greater and sweeter than that. On the day of Pentecost, those that gladly received the word were baptized. I pray you too will gladly receive the Word and will be baptized.

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