

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth (13:53-58)

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 - a. Is this not the carpenter's son? (v.55)
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In chapters 11 and 12 we see expressions of unbelief by the cities of Galilee (11:20-24) in general and more specifically with the Pharisees and scribes (12:1-14). They responded to his ministry by seeking to murder him (12:14, 24). In chapter 13 he speaks to "great crowds" beside the sea but with parables "...lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn...." (Matthew 13:15, ESV). Chapter 13 concludes with Jesus teaching in his own hometown (13:53-58). They respond by attempting to murder him.

"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." (Luke 4:28-29, ESV).

The flow of these chapters has gone from impersonal cities, to the religious leaders of the nation, to local crowds and now to the intimacy of his own hometown. He has presented himself to the people of Galilee and has been met with rejection by all. "Thus the theme of unbelief not only continues but grows as the Gospel proceeds, here coming to something of a climax in the unbelief of Jesus' own people in Nazareth."¹

Matthew 13:53 And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there,

We see this statement used at major completion points in Matthew's story.

"And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching," (Matthew 7:28, ESV)

"When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities." (Matthew 11:1, ESV)

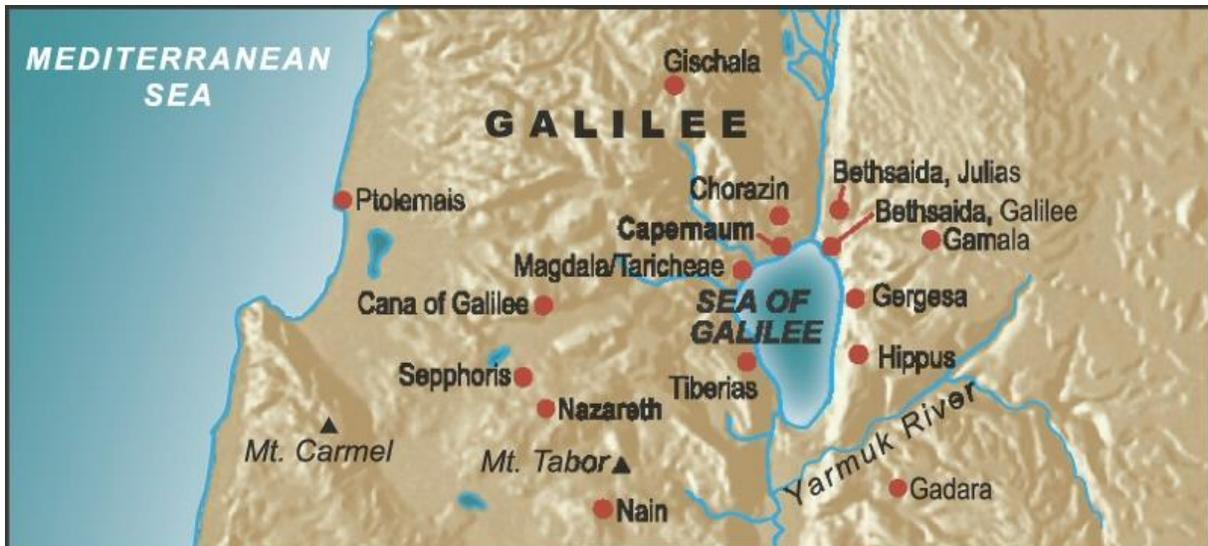
"And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there," (Matthew 13:53, ESV)

"Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan." (Matthew 19:1, ESV)

¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 403.

“When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples,” (Matthew 26:1, ESV)

He is now leaving the shore of Galilee and Capernaum and heading to the hill country of his hometown, Nazareth.



Nazareth, 1842

The population of Nazareth at the time of Jesus was from 500 to 2000



View of Modern Nazareth

In 2015 its population was 75,726. The inhabitants are predominantly Arab citizens of Israel, of whom 69% are Muslim and 30.9% Christian

Matthew 13:54 and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this [one] man get this wisdom and these mighty works?”

hometown....

“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.”
(Luke 4:16, ESV)

The last time we say Nazareth was in chapter 4.

“And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,” (Matthew 4:13, ESV)

their synagogue.... “This is Jesus’ only recorded return to Nazareth after his public ministry began....”²

“...it was, of course, the synagogue in which he himself had worshiped as he grew up.”³ Jesus had sat on these very benches for 30 years and now he has come home to speak to his family, friends and neighbors. In a village this small, he would have known everyone. He has gained a reputation as an itinerant Rabi and teacher. Now they want to hear firsthand what he has to say.

Matthew tells us where he taught—in their synagogue; Luke tells us what he taught noting Jesus’ use of Isaiah 61:1-2.

“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.

² France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 548). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

³ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (p. 549). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

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.” (Luke 4:16–21, ESV)

In stating that “today” this passage in Isaiah was fulfilled in their hearing, he is claiming to be the one the passage is foretelling, the messiah of God. As a result, they were...

astonished⁴.... The crowds were astonished when Jesus finished his Sermon on the Mount (7:28) and will be again later in the story: 19:25 and 23:33.

“Their amazement, however, did not move them to faith but instead provoked skepticism.”⁵

this [one] man.... The use of “this one” in verse 54 and again in verse 55 is very impersonal. Here is a man that has lived with them for over 30 years and they address him as if he is a virtual stranger. They use the name of his mother and brothers, but will not use his name. He is simply “this one.” It is an act of disrespect.

wisdom⁶.... “...the capacity to understand and, as a result, to act wisely—‘to be prudent, wisdom.’”⁷

“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.” (Luke 2:40, ESV)

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52, ESV)

⁴ *astonished* ἐκπλήσσω “...to be so amazed as to be practically overwhelmed—‘to be greatly astounded.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 405.

⁶ *wisdom* σοφία “Wisdom, skill, tact, expertise in any art.

(I) Skill in the affairs of life, practical wisdom, wise management as shown in forming the best plans and selecting the best means, including the idea of sound judgment and good sense....

(II) In a higher sense, wisdom, deep knowledge, natural and moral insight, learning, science, implying cultivation of mind and enlightened understanding.

(III) The wisdom of God means the divine wisdom, including the ideas of infinite skill, insight, knowledge, purity (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:21, 24; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:3; Rev. 5:12; 7:12). Of the divine wisdom as revealed and manifested in Christ and His gospel (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35; 11:49).

(IV) Fear, wisdom, generally the knowledge of how to regulate one’s relationship with God, wisdom which is related with goodness. When one is wise unto God, he is *phrónimos* (5429), prudent with others and knows how to regulate circumstances.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 383.

This “incident in the temple is a reminder of the Jewish view that wisdom is closely associated with knowledge of the law....”⁸

mighty works⁹.... Wisdom was demonstrated in his teachings; **mighty works** were demonstrated in his healings. But the Pharisees had already planted the seeds of unbelief in the minds of Jesus’ audience.

“But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.””
(Matthew 9:34, ESV)

“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”” (Matthew 12:24, ESV)

Harboring this unbelief and doubt, they found it impossible to ascribe to Jesus the heavenly power the mighty works clearly demonstrated. They weren’t fully persuaded he was demon possessed but nor were they willing to give glory to God for these miraculous works. Perhaps he was simply a skilled magician. “The person who seemed to have found a short-cut to power and significance could readily be accused of engagement in the black arts (collusion with the devil).”¹⁰

Matthew 13:55 Is not this [one] the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

this [one].... This is now their second use of this impersonal phrase. It is as if they are disassociating themselves from one they knew very well. He has a name, but they refuse to use it.

carpenter’s¹¹ “Only here in the Gospels do we discover that Jesus was ... “the son of the carpenter....”¹²

Their point would be that this man, Jesus, comes from common folk. He is not from the educated Rabi class. He has no credentials. He is not important. “Jesus would not have had a lot of inherited honor as a member of a family of modest means in a carpenter’s household; in a strongly hierarchical society Jesus did not come from an appropriate stratum for a person of major importance.”¹³

⁸ Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 335.

⁹ *mighty works* δύνναμις “...a deed manifesting great power, with the implication of some supernatural force— ‘mighty deed, miracle.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

¹⁰ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 576). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

¹¹ *carpenter* τέκτων.... “...one who uses various materials (wood, stone, and metal) in building— ‘builder, carpenter.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 519.

¹² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 405.

¹³ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 576). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

These people know the family well enough to give the name of the mother and the four brothers. The fact that they call him “the carpenter’s son” and do not mention Joseph suggest Joseph has passed away.

Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? Matthew 13:56 And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

In addition to the four brothers, Jesus had sisters. We are not told how many. The minimum number of siblings would therefore be six and probably more. Mary was the mother of a medium to large family. “Since large families would have been quite common, the number of siblings attributed to Jesus is quite reasonable.”¹⁴

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a perpetual virgin. However, clearly this teaching is not rooted in the gospels, which say otherwise. It is instead rooted in a corrupt theology called Gnosticism. A major tenant of Gnosticism is that the material world is evil, hence sex is evil, hence priests should be celibate and most importantly, someone as pure as Mary would certainly never have sex. All this is foreign to Scripture. The Bible’s attitude toward the material world of God’s creation is clear.

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31, ESV)

In the Old Testament, marriage is holy and the priests of the temple were married men. Instructions are given to the priests as to who they may and may not marry.

“They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God.”
“And he shall take a wife in her virginity.” (Leviticus 21:7, 13, ESV)

Nothing has changed in the New Testament.

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” (Hebrews 13:4, ESV)

And in fact, the apostles themselves were married men and to the embarrassment of the Roman Church, so was Peter, the one they falsely call their first Pope. And of course, as a Pope he was not to be married.

“Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5, ESV)

The phrase “*brothers of the Lord*” again makes it clear that Mary was not a perpetual virgin.

“Several decades ago, the distinguished Roman Catholic commentator Rudolf Schnackenburg, 1:131–32, acknowledged that recent Catholic exegesis was approaching the Protestant conviction that our text speaks of Jesus’ *true* brothers and

¹⁴ Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (p. 576). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

sisters (not of his cousins or of his half-siblings by Joseph's putative first marriage), which of course raises questions about the traditional teaching of Mary's *perpetual* virginity. Jesus' brothers and sisters in the Gospel accounts are now almost universally accepted in scientific commentaries as Jesus' biological brothers and sisters."¹⁵

Matthew 13:57 *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."*

They quickly go from being *astonished* in verse 13:54 to being *scandalized* (took offense) in 13:57.

they took offense¹⁶.... "They found it intolerable that Jesus spoke as he did with the undeniable implication of his own self-importance."¹⁷ They responded in unbelief.

"And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." (Matthew 11:6, ESV)

As we see every day, the world takes offense at righteousness, while finding sin a most satisfying companion.

Matthew 13:58 *And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.*

unbelief.... This is the only place in Matthew that Jesus will use this word.

"The people in his own home town, however, and even his own household or family (cf. Mark 3:21) were outraged and indignant at the pretensions of one who was to them so familiar and hence thought to be ordinary...."¹⁸

"And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."¹⁹ (Mark 3:21, ESV)

But why did they get so angry at him? The answer is found in the rest of Jesus' teaching that day.

"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

¹⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 61–62.

¹⁶ *they took offense* *σκανδαλίζω* "...to cause someone to experience anger and/or shock because of what has been said or done—to cause one to be offended, to offend." Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Societies.

¹⁷ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 406.

¹⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (vol. 33A; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 406.

¹⁹ *He is out of his mind* *ἐξίστημι* "① a state of consternation or profound emotional experience to the point of being beside oneself, ② a state of being in which consciousness is wholly or partially suspended, freq. associated with divine action, *trance, ecstasy*...." William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 309.

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.” (Luke 4:25–30, ESV)

Jesus is declaring them to be like the unbelieving Jews of that earlier day which were less worthy of the blessings of God than were the despised Gentiles. So, one more time the people of Israel attempt to murder him.

“Nazareth apparently joins Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (11:20–24) in the inglorious roll of the communities which failed to repent....”²⁰

One author notes that “many Nazarenes died in the Judean-Roman war....”²¹ Which means that Jesus in A.D. 70, judged and put to death those that judged and attempted to put him to death.

After this incident, “Jesus never returns to Nazareth, nor does he ever again enter a synagogue....”²²

²⁰ France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 548–549). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 396.

²² Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Churchbook, Matthew 13–28* (vol. 2, Revised and Expanded Edition.; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 62.