

## WHY ALL THE FUSS OVER A JEWISH CARPENTER

### MATTHEW 13:53-58

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*Matthew 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? 55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? 57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

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#### Introduction

Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Parable of the Four Soils (Matthew 13:1-30; 37-43)

Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)

Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33)

Parable of the Treasure, Pearls, Net (Matthew 13:44-50)

The phrase; “The kingdom of heaven” is found 33 times in the New Testament. John the Baptist proclaims it in Matthew 3:2. The disciples ask Jesus a question concerning the “kingdom of heaven” once. (Matthew 18:1). The other 31 times, Jesus says the phrase. It is found 6 times in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew. (Matthew 13:11, 24, 31, 44, 45, 47, 52)

Perhaps a more literal translation would be “the reign of heaven” or “the reign of God draws near.”

After the death of John the Baptist, Jesus took up his mantle, and proclaimed to the world, “*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matthew 4:17). That message is the bedrock of everything else Jesus would do the remainder of His life. The message was controversial and shook the Jewish world like an earthquake. Every person who heard the message of John the Baptist and now Jesus, was left with a decision...accept or reject the teaching that the long awaited Messiah had come and the Kingdom of Heaven was now.

It didn't matter whether a person was poor or rich. Their status in society did not make a difference. Their education was a moot point. Accept or Reject: the truth was proclaimed; it was now up to each individual to respond.

Going Home

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*Matthew 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54 And when he was come into his own country,*

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At one time or another in our lives, we return home. Those familiar settings, friends and family beckon us, once we have been separated from them. It was no different for Jesus, however, sometimes the reception we envision, simply doesn't happen.

I was stationed in Chicago at the end of my first enlistment. The decision loomed ahead, whether to "re-up" or take a discharge and I was on the fence. I took two weeks leave to return home to find my fortune and reunite with our friends. There was not a pot of gold in Denver, nor were our friends the same. Four years saw many changes in all our lives. While it was great visiting with them, our lives had taken different turns. The words of Thomas Wolfe rang true for us:

"You can't go back home to your family, back home to your childhood, back home to romantic love, back home to a young man's dreams of glory and of fame...back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time – back home to the escapes of Time and Memory."

The task of Jesus' ministry was forever on His mind. Now, at the end of teaching parables concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, He looks to return to "*his own country*."

I wonder what compelled Him to return to His home town, at this particular point in time?

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*54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*

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When Jesus and His disciples arrived, we are not told of Him reuniting with His family and friends. Instead it is the Sabbath (Mark 6:2) and Jesus enters their synagogue where He is asked to read and teach by the elder of the synagogue.

There is nothing by chance for the Savior of the world. Happenstance is not part of His life. Everything is done in order and with reason. I wonder what Scriptures He read from. What truths would He reveal to those in attendance on this Sabbath morning. We are not told, but the result has everyone talking.

*...he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished* – Nazareth was a small village, therefore, the synagogue would be small in comparison to the ones in Jerusalem and Capernaum. A typical service would include prayers, readings from both the Law and the Prophets, followed by a teaching or sermon. The elder of the synagogue could call on any Jewish man in good standing to lead the service. One other point, since Nazareth was a poor village, they may only have had portions of the Law and Prophets. Only the very rich could afford to have the painstakingly difficult copies made.

There are three accounts of Jesus teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth; Matthew 13:53-58, Mark 6:1-6 and Luke 4:16-30. The account found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark seem to be the same event. However, the account found in Luke seems quite different from these two and is commonly known as the beginning of His ministry.

If Luke's account was a previous visit, which most commentators agree, it would make sense to read it now and understand the history of Jesus and those in the synagogue in Nazareth:

*Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,*

*18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. [Isaiah 61:1-2]*

*20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? 23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. 28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*

This is the first time that Jesus is rejected by his home town. We now find Jesus, at home again, leading in a service. Unfortunately, as before, we will see, the same blind the hearts and minds of them.

*...and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? – Strong’s Notes suggest that the word wisdom refers to “wisdom, broad and full of intelligence; used of the knowledge of very diverse matters.<sup>1</sup>”*

The term *mighty works* normally is considered in one of three uses: the works of God, the works of Jesus Christ and the works of man in relation to their faith.<sup>2</sup>

In essence the hearers of the message of Jesus on this Sabbath were astonished – They were greatly amazed or astonished, the Greek word carries the idea “to drive out of ones senses.” They could not take in all that Jesus was teaching or the depth in which He taught.

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*55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?*

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Those in attendance know of Jesus and His family. They saw Him grow up and since it is such a small village, they knew the training that He would have received by the Rabbi in the local synagogue. They contemplate His supposed lack of theological education which deepens their contempt for what He is teaching. Basically they are saying His education was lacking. We know of Mary. We know His brothers and sisters.

Note: Jesus half-brothers James and Judas (Jude) wrote epistles in the New Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

<sup>2</sup> Connell, J. C. (1996). Works. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 1248). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

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*56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*

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The question of the day, no, the question of all time, “Where then did this man get all these things?” Little did they know or comprehend that the Creator of all things, was in their midst. The keeper of all knowledge was standing right in front of them. Their understanding of the mission of Jesus was hidden from them. They only saw a young man that grew up in their presence proclaiming the Scriptures as one who truly understood them. This was more than they could handle.

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*57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

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*And they were offended in him* – Matthew takes an interesting approach in his selection of the Greek word *scandalon* for the word offended. The word carries the idea of “a stumbling block” and “sinfulness.” So, they “stumbled at him.”

Christ fulfills the OT prophet Isaiah as the “rock of offense.” (Isaiah 8:14). Jesus speaks the truth and the truth places a stumbling block in the synagogue that day. The result is that many were offended.

*...A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house* – A prophet is one who has been ordained to speak for God and in most cases interprets God’s will for man to know and to act upon.

*...in his own country* - Multitudes thronged around Jesus at all times. He was praised and highly sought after everywhere He went, except in Nazareth. Jesus refers to the Old Testament prophets who revealed God’s will for His chosen people and in many cases, Israel rejected them and their words.

*...in his own house* – could refer to his “tribe” but more certainly refers to his own household of Joseph, Mary, James, Joses, Simon, Judas and His sisters. All but Mary truly understood His mission. It was only after His death that James and Jude fully believed.

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*58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

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Unbelief = not many mighty works.

Mark writes:

*Mark 6:5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. 7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;*

Mark counts the healing of a few sick folk as not equaling a mighty work. Isn’t that fascinating? His disciples had seen Jesus heal so many that it was not seen as a great work from God.

Conclusion

Our Christianity can become like the Nazarites or the disciples. Unbelief and our faith becoming mundane.

I believe that the reason Matthew and Mark told this story hinges on results of doing the work of the LORD.

1. Hearers of the Truth, may reject the truth because of their own bias.
2. Lack of faith and belief will reduce the power and the miracles to be accomplished
3. Even in the worst of conditions, we are still to keep pressing towards the mark.

*Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

03/13/16 A Different Kind of King Acts 17:1-7  
03/20/16 Who Is Jesus to You? Various  
03/27/16 He's Alive Matthew 27-28:1-10