

THE MESSIAH WAS REJECTED IN HIS HOME TOWN: WHY JESUS IS REJECTED MATHEW 13:53–58

DIVISION OVERVIEW Mathew 13:53–16:12 Jesus Christ, Ministry

Jesus was rejected by Nazareth, His hometown, and threatened by Herod (Mt. 14:1f); therefore, He withdrew from Herod's dominion (Mt. 14:13).

Introduction Mathew 13:53–58 Childhood and Early Life of Jesus Christ

Something of Jesus' early life can be imagined from this passage.

1. Note the words "his hometown." This was Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. The city was surrounded by rolling hills and sat within eyesight of some of the major caravan routes of the day. As a boy Jesus would have roamed over the hills playing and talking with the traders from all over the world (see *Nazareth*, Mt. 2:23).
 2. Note the words "Where did this man get this wisdom...?" Jesus' education was in the home and the local synagogue (all Jewish boys were trained in the local synagogue). He was taught primarily at the feet of His mother and father, not at the feet of some famous teacher. He had no training from a university, and He had no degree, nor was He recognized and called "Rabbi" by the public at large.
 3. Note the words "the carpenter's son." As the oldest son in the family, He would have helped His father, learning and working as a carpenter beside his father's side. He knew what it was to build a house (Mt. 7:24-27), a tower (Lk. 13:4; 14:28; Mk. 12:1), a barn (Lk. 12:18), and an oxen yoke (Mt. 11:29). He knew about beams (Mt. 7:3-4) and strong foundations (Lk. 6:48-49; 14:29). He did the very best at whatever He did, so He was the best of carpenters. Apparently His father died while He was still home, so He would have been the head of the house and the major breadwinner for a number of years. (Note that nothing is ever said about Joseph during Jesus' ministry and that Jesus commits His mother into John's hands as He is dying. See Jn. 19:26-27. Note also that v. 55 mentions only Mary.)
 4. Note the words "his brothers...and his sisters" (v. 55-56). Jesus apparently had four half-brothers and some half-sisters. The word *sisters* probably refers to several, meaning at least three. The sisters are never named so the number remains unknown. They were all brought up in the same home with Jesus' being the oldest. He would have played with them as any normal child would, and as the eldest child, He would have helped in looking after their needs as directed by His parents.
 5. Note the words, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?" Jesus knew His neighbour well, and His neighbour knew Him and His family well.
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Having done all things well, Jesus would have been the very best of neighbours. He and His neighbours would have been close. They would have shared together — shared their homes and the joys and griefs that come with kinship and friendship. Many of those who were now rejecting Him would have been His playmates as a child, men and women with whom He had grown up and known so well (see notes, Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:21; Lk. 8:19-21. See Jn. 7:3-5.)

Jesus' experience with His hometown friends and neighbours must have hurt Him deeply. Luke says they were going to kill Him (Lk. 4:28-29). He loved them in a very special way because they had been His friends, and He wanted to do so much for them. But He was unable to do anything, for they rejected Him (see notes, Mt. 12:53-58).

Note the major reasons for their rejection.

- I. Jesus finished teaching the parables (vv. 53-54).
- II. Reason 1: they did not understand the source of His wisdom and power (vv. 54-56).
- III. Reason 2: they were offended because of Him (v. 57).
- IV. Reason 3: they did not believe Him (v. 58).

I. Mathew 13:53–54 Jesus Christ Teaching at Nazareth

First, Jesus loved and sought to save His friends, so He finished His teaching of the parables. Jesus stayed where He was until He had completed His ministry. He departed only after He “had finished these parables,” that is, His teaching ministry.

Thought 1. The very fact that this is mentioned is a strong lesson for us. We should complete each task before moving on elsewhere.

1. Jesus went to Nazareth, His hometown. Why? We are not told, but its citizens had been His neighbours and many must have been very dear friends. As with most of us, He loved His hometown. He had so much to offer in helping to meet their needs. They were as other men — lost and without hope and needing a Saviour. He longed to help those with whom He had played, grown up and rubbed shoulders for thirty years.
2. Jesus taught, but they rejected Him. The people's rejection was strong. There was *scorn and spite* in their rejection. A quick glance at the questions they were asking and at Luke's account will show this. Luke tells us that they set out to kill Jesus (Lk. 4:28-29).

Thought 1. What is it that causes such scorn and spite?

- 1) A sense of inferiority can cause scorn and spite. Inferiority is caused by being bruised. Nazareth was a conquered city and was despised by the Roman conquerors. The city was also despised by the rest of the Jewish nation (Jn. 1:46). A citizen of Nazareth was the object of deep prejudice by all. Inferior persons handle their inferiority...
 - by withdrawing
 - by reacting with a reverse pride

- by rejecting those who are or seem to be above their status

In Jesus' case, the latter two seem to have been at play against Him.

- 2) Familiarity often breeds contempt or less respect (see note, Mt. 12:46-47).
- 3) A feeling of being *bypassed* or *unblessed* by the powers that be, whether God or some destiny out in space, can cause scorn and spite. A person can feel left out and destined to be nothing: dull, unlovely, incapable, ungifted, disadvantaged. He can sense being so worthless and disadvantaged that he acts like it. Of course, such an attitude comes from a wrong view of God. It was this that caused Jesus' hometown to despise and scorn Him. They wondered how in the world a person from their own midst could possess such wisdom and authority.

John 9:34 *To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.*

Rom 2:4-6 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done.*

2 Tim 3:1-3 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy; without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good.*

2 Pet 2:9-10 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings.*

II. **Mathew 13:54–56** *Jesus Christ's Unusual Wisdom Causes Rejection*

Second, Jesus was rejected because the people did not understand the source of His wisdom and power.

1. Jesus lacked proper credentials and education (see note, pt. 2, Mt. 13:53-58). They recognized His unusual wisdom and works. They heard His wisdom and saw His works, but they understood neither. They would not acknowledge that He had really come from God (Lk. 4:16-21; Jn. 10:30-38).

Thought 1. Many judge

- education
- name
- fame
- social status
- wealth
- position
- success
- prestige
- heritage
- achievement
- roots

2. Jesus was from humble beginnings. His family was humble and ordinary — just an average family and nothing more. His father, Joseph, was a carpenter; His mother, Mary, was a housewife and mother. Neither parent had achieved any prominence nor had any of the children risen above or given promise of any more than the other children of Nazareth. How could Jesus possibly be who He was claiming to be: the Messiah, God’s very own Son (see Lk. 4:16-21)?

John 1:10-11 *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

John 4:10 *Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”*

John 8:19 *Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”*

John 9:30 *The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.”*

John 14:9 *Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”*

Acts 13:27 *The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.*

III. **Mathew 13:57** *People Offended by Jesus Christ*

Third, Jesus was rejected because people were offended by Him. The literal meaning of offended is *stumbling*. His neighbour and friends *stumbled over* Him.

1. They could not imagine that someone from their own house — someone whom they knew and had known from a child — *could be the Messiah*, the Son of God. (See note, pt. 5, Mt. 13:53-58.)
2. They could not imagine that someone who had been born in their own country and lived among them could be making the claims that He was making. A man who ate, drank, worked and slept among them had *no right to speak* and make such claims. (See note, pt. 2, Mt. 13:53- 54.)

Mat 27:39-40 *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”*

Mark 15:31-32 *In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.*

Luke 5:21 *The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

Luke 23:25 *He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.*

Luke 23:36-37 *The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

Luke 23:29 *"For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'"*

John 5:18 *For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

John 10:33 *"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."*

Thought 1. Most people deny a God beyond themselves. They exile God by seldom, if ever, considering Him. They consider Him to be some remote power in outer space or in another dimension of being. They put Him *out there, not in here*, not in their world and in their lives.

- 1) Men do not want God too close. If God is close, right here, then a man has to submit to God, serving and obeying Him. Man is just unwilling to give up the strings to his life. Therefore he creates *a mental god*, a god *far off*— far enough away to be unknown and to have little control over his life.
- 2) Men do not want a God who reveals Himself. If God revealed Himself, it would mean that man would have to serve and obey Him. Man simply wants a god *out there*, a god *beyond*, a god whom man has to seek. He wants a god far enough away that he has *to guess and work out* what God and His laws are. By having to seek after God and His laws, man is able to *make up* and to *imagine* God to be as he wishes. Therefore, man is able to make up his own god and rules and laws— able to live as he wishes.

Luke 9:23-24 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

Luke 14: 33 *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

1 Pet 4:2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

Thought 2. We must choose! We either shrink Christ to our level of humanness or else surrender to Him as the Incarnate Son of God. He is either one of us or else the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. If He is mere man, He is the worst imposter and most tragic deceiver in history, for He claimed to be the Son of God Himself. If He is the Messiah, then He is our Lord and our God.

Thought 3. Prophets should be honoured. Some people do honour them, but not everyone. Jesus is saying prophets are worthy of honor (see 1 Tim 5:17).

IV. Mathew 13:58 Unbelief Causes Rejection of Jesus Christ

Fourth, Jesus was rejected because the people did not believe Him.

Luke 22:67 "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me."

John 3:11 "I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony."

John 4:48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

John 6:64 "Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

John 10:24-25 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me."

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Thought 1. Unbelief results in some bitter fruit.

1) Unbelief hurts the unbeliever. The unbeliever loses life — life abundant in this world and life eternal in the next world.

John 3:18 "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

John 5:39-40 "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

2) Unbelief hurts the unbeliever's neighbours and friends. Imagine all the good that could be shared and experienced by the neighbours and friends of an unbeliever if he just trusted Christ!

=> Imagine the difference on a personal scale: fewer tragedies, trials, temptations, broken homes, bankruptcies, diseases and accidents; less envy, jealousy, prejudice, disappointment, discouragement, loss and disruption.

=> Imagine the difference on a global scale: fewer wars, savage beasts, terrorism, broken treaties, and less economic greed, turmoil, poverty, hunger and death.

3) Unbelief hurts Christ. It cuts His heart. He longs to give life and to help us along day by day. But as in Nazareth, He is often denied the right to show His love and power to the unbeliever.

Mat 9:36 *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Mat 14:14 *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

Mat 15:32 *Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."*

Mat 23:37 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem [world], you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."*

Mat 20:34 *Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.*

Mark 1:40-41 *A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"*

Luke 7:12-14 *As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out — the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"*

John 11:35 *Jesus wept.*

Thought 2. Unbelief hurts everyone. God cannot work where there is unbelief. Unbelief shuts God out; it pushes Him away and refuses to let God's love and power work.

Thought 3. It has been centuries since Christ came, yet the world is still unreached and denying God, reeling in the tragedy of unbelief. The lack is not on God's part; the lack is on our part — it is our unbelief.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

2 Pet 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ■*