

# Offended By Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're told in verse 1 that Jesus traveled from Capernaum, where he was in these other instances, we believe, with Jairus and the woman with the issue of blood.

And he travels from there and goes to his hometown, which we know to be Nazareth. So though Jesus was born in Bethlehem and spent his infant months as a refugee in Egypt, most of his earthly life, at least 30 years probably, was lived in the obscurity of this small town near Galilee.

Now scholars estimate that the town of Nazareth in Jesus' day had a population of about 500 people. So Nazareth was the type of town that everyone knew everyone else.

Have you ever been in a town like that? You ever grow up maybe near a town like that, where just everyone knew everyone? And it's nothing like this area. In just this little tiny space in Cornelius, there's 30,000 people.

Well, in the same amount of space in Nazareth, there was 500. There was one market. There's one place for people to meet. There's one synagogue. Everybody knows everybody else.

[ 1 : 14 ] Everybody probably is in everybody else's business. You know how that goes, right? Like everybody knows everybody. Jesus lived for 30 years of his life in this little town, in this small town dynamic.

So he wasn't unknown in Nazareth. Everybody there knew him. Not only that, he knew everybody in Nazareth. And so it was located about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum.

And it was so insignificant of a place that nowhere outside of the New Testament is the town ever mentioned in ancient literature. Now Luke tells us that Jesus had gone back to Nazareth, his hometown, one other time early on in his ministry.

And some have suggested that these two events are one and the same. I don't think that that is the case. The descriptions are far too different. And I do think that it's best to view them as two separate occurrences.

Luke actually includes many more details about the early visit that Jesus made to Nazareth. In fact, if you want to write this reference down, you can read about it later. Luke chapter 4, 16 to 32 is where you'll find that story.

[ 2 : 28 ] Jesus had gone back to Nazareth and same thing. They invited him to teach in the synagogue. And his preaching that day so infuriated the people that they literally tried to execute him.

His own people. The people he'd grown up with his whole life. He goes to the synagogue and he begins to teach and he reads from Isaiah about the Messiah. And then he closes the scroll and Luke says that Jesus looked at the people in the synagogue and he said, Today this is fulfilled. Today this is fulfilled in me. It's fulfilled in your presence, in your ears, in your eyes. I am him is what he says. And then they grew in their unbelief.

They were infuriated further by some of his other statements. And they grabbed him and attempted to throw him off of a cliff. Jesus escaped and continued on into his ministry in Capernaum.

So the visits to Nazareth are not usually very prosperous for Jesus. The last time he was there, they tried to murder him.

[ 3 : 34 ] This time he went with his disciples, which I think is significant. This trip wasn't for visiting family. It wasn't for seeing his old stomping grounds.

This was a stop on his itinerant preaching schedule. And as he came into town with his disciples, he had an intention in mind. And the episode reveals that the hardest of hearts when it comes to the faith often belong to the people that we least expect.

But it also provided an incredible lesson to these disciples just before he sends them out to preach on their own. So picture for me here what Jesus is doing.

Jesus is going to send his 12 out kind of on their first like short-term mission trip. And they're going to be responsible to go and share the gospel. But just before he does that, he brings them along with him to Nazareth, where he knows what is going to take place.

What they're going to witness is not great revival. What they're going to witness is great rejection. And this was an important lesson for these men. As they were getting ready to go out and fulfill this commission that Jesus had given them, they needed to be prepared for rejection.

[ 4 : 52 ] And so though this passage is heartbreaking really at its core, the event was valuable training for his disciples.

It was encouragement probably for Mark's early Roman readers. And then of course it is just as valuable for us today. Okay. I've really divided this into three sections like typically would be done. And so here's the first thing if you like to keep an outline. I wrote his reception, his reception. Look with me at verses two and three again. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue.

And many hearing him were astonished, saying, from whence had this man these things? What wisdom is this which is given unto him that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

[ 5 : 53 ] He comes back to his hometown. And actually what happens is the first time they try to kill him. And then this time they are just as hardened in their heart. And their unbelief is such that Jesus responds with marveling.

He says that he literally stood in awe at their unbelief. And a part of this rejection, this rejection that they give when he comes back to Nazareth, is really twofold.

They rejected his message first in verse number two. And then they resented him personally in verse three. Let's just work through it. Look at verse number two. On the Sabbath day, began to teach in the synagogue.

Many who heard him were astonished, saying, where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? So as was Jesus' custom, he gathered at the local synagogue on the Sabbath day to worship.

This time with his disciples, there was clearly evidence that his rabbinical career was strong. And so as was customary in other places, a visiting rabbi, especially with a particular following, was invited to deliver some kind of lesson or message on the Sabbath day.

[ 7 : 07 ] Perhaps people had had a bit of amnesia from the last time that he was there. Maybe they wanted to just give him a second chance. Perhaps the ruler of the synagogue was sympathetic to Jesus in some way.

We don't know. Jesus opens up the Torah scrolls, though, and he begins to teach. We don't know what he taught, but we can be certain that it's the same message he's teaching everywhere else. Mark tells us in chapter one, the kingdom of heaven is near.

It's at hand. Repent and believe the good news. The message never changed for Jesus. It hasn't changed today. Everywhere he went, it's repent and believe the gospel.

Repent and believe the gospel. So he goes back to Nazareth, and he's not going to water down his message now because of their response the last time. He's going to preach the same truth as boldly as he preached it before, because it is only the truth of the gospel that can actually benefit them and change their lives.

So he doesn't change it. He goes back, repent, and believe the good news because the kingdom of heaven is near. And what he means by that is I am near. I am near to you.

[ 8 : 14 ] This is who I am. And interestingly enough, in verse two, the people could not deny the authority with which he taught the scripture.

It says that they were astonished. They were amazed. But their amazement, as we come to find out, was packaged in skepticism rather than faith.

So these questions that follow, they're not coming from a heart of discernment. It's not that the people of Nazareth were listening to Jesus in the synagogue and being like the Bereans in the book of Acts, where they were diligently searching the Torah scrolls to see if these things were true.

This isn't coming from a discerning heart that wanted to know the truth. This was actually coming from a heart of denial that refused to believe the truth.

It wasn't that they were searching it out. It's that they saw who Jesus was. They recognized him only as the boy that grew up next door. And they said, we won't believe this.

[ 9 : 17 ] Look at the questions again. What is it that they ask? Where did this man get these things? Where did he get this from? This isn't what we've always been taught.

This isn't what the rabbis have been teaching us our whole lives. What is this wisdom that's been given to him? Where did this come from? And then look at this last question.

How are such mighty works done by his hand? Okay, this is skepticism, not faith. This is not, wow, how is he doing this? No, it's like, how is he doing this?

How is he doing this? This is skepticism. This is not faith. The people were aware of Jesus' mighty acts. They just didn't thoughtfully and honestly consider its source.

Instead, they defaulted to skepticism, which is so often what happens, isn't it? Look at verse 3, though. Their questions continue, but they get more personal. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon?

[ 10 : 23 ] Are not his sisters here with us? So the questions grow increasingly more hostile. They move from rejecting Jesus' message to demonstrating resentment for who he is as an individual and as a person, which tells us something significant about Jesus' upbringing.

Perhaps you've heard people refer to the veil of humanity. That the humanity, his humanness, he was thoroughly man, 100%.

And there was almost a veil for the people in Nazareth that they couldn't see beyond the fact that he was a man to actually comprehend that he was more than a man, that he was also God.

The response of the people is another proof of Jesus' humanness. And that's important because Jesus' humanness is essential to the gospel.

If Jesus wasn't truly a man, he could not truly die for our sins. He had to be fully man. But he also had to be fully God.

[ 11 : 33 ] And the scriptures testify to this over and over and over. And even as we come to a tragic passage in the scripture, we see once again evidence of Jesus' humanness.

But I want you to look at these three questions as they grow. First question, is not this the carpenter? The reference here, this is not meant to be derogatory toward the trade itself.

Actually, in this time and in this way, the kind of labor that was involved with this craftsmanship was actually very well respected. It was just meant to speak to his total ordinariness.

That to them, there was nothing unique about Jesus. And it reflects their earlier questions. Is not this, he's a carpenter, not a rabbi. He didn't go to rabbinical school. Who is he to teach us these things?

He's just a carpenter. He's just a craftsman. And they go on. They say something that possibly was actually very insulting. They say, is not this the son of Mary?

[ 12 : 36 ] The son of Mary. What makes this potentially insulting? Perhaps maybe they didn't quite mean it this way. It's hard not to understand it in this way as you read through the gospels. But a man in this custom was always referred to by his father's name, even if his father was dead.

So even if Joseph was dead, customarily, he would have not been referred to as the son of Mary. He would have been referred to as the son of Joseph. And he was in other passages of scripture, even beyond what probably was his earthly father's death.

But he wasn't referred to here as the son of Joseph, but as the son of Mary. This was done when the legitimacy of an individual's birth was questioned. So it's not only that they're saying he's just a carpenter.

They're saying, how could somebody that we don't even think is legitimate, whose mother is an adulterer, we don't even know who his real father is. How could he be this Messiah?

And so it gets a little more personal. And then the final thing is they start pointing out his siblings, who were probably in the synagogue that day. We've been introduced to them once before in Mark's gospel.

[ 13 : 51 ] They came to Capernaum in order to stop him. They thought he lost his mind. Now they're in the synagogue. And these people that are questioning Jesus openly, is how Mark records this. This is open rejection.

They're saying these things to Jesus. And they say, aren't you the brother of James and Judas and Joseph? And Simon? Aren't these your sisters over here?

In other words, your own family doesn't even believe you. Why should we? None of Jesus's siblings, as far as we can tell in the scriptures, believed until after the resurrection.

And even after his resurrection, we don't know that all of them believed. We just know that a few of them at least believed. And so he comes to the synagogue and they start asking these questions, not from a perspective of faith, not because they were legitimately trying to reason through these things, but because they were rejecting him outright, rejecting his message and resenting his person.

Your own family doesn't even believe you. Get out of here with this stuff. And then Mark summarizes this response in verse 3. And they took offense at him. They took offense at him. [14:59] That word offense, it means to stumble at something. It doesn't mean that Jesus did something offensive, but that the people stumbled at the ordinary humanness to the extent that they refused to believe his message and to acknowledge his works.

Paul uses this word another time. It might have been to the Corinthian church in one of those letters. He says that to the Jews that the cross of Christ is a rock of offense, a rock of offense, a rock of stumbling.

They stumble over the crucifixion because they will not accept that their Messiah would have been rejected in such a way. Same word here. They stumbled at him.

Well, what is it that they're stumbling at? They're stumbling at what they had grown up with, not because he had ever done anything wrong, but because to them he was just a man. And they refused to believe who he really was.

So the bottom line is that Jesus didn't meet their messianic expectations. They expected a warrior, political leader, not a carpenter.

[16:08] They expected a king, a royal birth, not someone whose birth was shrouded in scandal. They anticipated a national revolution, not a spiritual kingdom.

Are you tracking with me now? Their messianic expectations weren't met in Jesus, so they refused him. And this is exactly what Isaiah told us would happen.

Isaiah 53. He grew up before him like a young plant, like a root out of a dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him, because he's a Nazarene.

He's despised. There's nothing significant about Jesus in human form. He was despised. He was despised. He was rejected by men, a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Hundreds of years before, Isaiah plainly says, this servant of God will be despised, and he will be despised by us, by us, the Jews.

[17:24] And here we see Jesus going back to his own hometown. And what is it that they do? They despise him. There's nothing significant about you. There's no beauty for which we could look at with you.

There's no form to which you could impress us. You're no better than us, Jesus. You're just a Nazarene like the rest of us. And so his reception was quite cold.

Secondly, we see his reply. His reply. Look at verse 4. Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, and among his relatives, and in his own household.

It's an interesting reply here that Jesus has, which, by the way, how you receive Jesus is the most important thing that you will ever do.

The way that you receive him. They received him in unbelief and in coldness. That's the most significant decision you will ever make.

[18:29] What will I do with Jesus? John told us, John the Baptist actually said this in John chapter 3. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

That's significant to this story. Because whether or not the people in Nazareth were going to experience eternal life or whether they were going to remain under the wrath of God depended on how they received Jesus.

And that's the same thing for you and I. Whether or not we have eternal life and whether or not we remain under the wrath of God is in how we respond and receive Jesus.

And so Jesus replies to this unbelief, and he says this proverb, similar to what we would say from familiarity breeds contempt. Perhaps you've heard that before. When criticized for our faith, we tend

to respond with either spiteful anger, either we get upset about it, or we weaken our stand on the truth.

Jesus didn't either of these things. He committed himself to the truth. We know that because he said, a prophet is not without honor. He's sticking to the fact that this is who he is.

[ 19 : 46 ] He is the Messiah. So he didn't back down on the truth. He just acknowledged the people's rejection, but he did it without sinning against them. He wasn't angry. But then this was, this was a particularly helpful lesson to his disciples.

His statement was for everyone in the synagogue. Everybody there heard it. It was the people in the synagogue speaking against him. But I can't help but think that Jesus maybe turns his attention specifically to his disciples at this point.

So just, just for my benefit, because this helps me, maybe, maybe this would be helpful to you. Picture yourself in the synagogue on this day. Jesus would have been sitting somewhere near the center, seated, the scroll open, teaching, and there would be risers around the sides on the walls, and you would be on the risers, and the synagogue would be full, it'd be full of people. Everybody listening with their eyes fixed on Jesus. And he says all these things, and then people start to respond from around the room. And they're asking all of these questions, and they're beginning to attack him. And then Jesus makes this statement.

Now, he makes it for everybody to hear, but let's say his disciples are over here in the front. They got a front row seat. He says it for everybody to hear, but perhaps his gaze is set on his disciples.

[ 21 : 07 ] And what is it that he says to his disciples? A prophet is not without honor, except in his own hometown, and among his relatives, and even his own household. This was a lesson for these men.

It's a lesson for these men, which means it's a lesson for you and me. They were to expect this rejection. If Jesus's own family rejected him in such a severe way, they should expect the same to happen to them.

And this was reiterated by Jesus over and over and over in his ministry. A servant is not greater than his master, he said, over and over.

Jesus said he did not come to bring peace, but a sword. He said this in Matthew 10. And he followed that up by saying, whoever would love son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever would love father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. But he that is worthy of me will take up his cross and deny himself and follow after me. What did Jesus mean by that?

[ 22 : 15 ] His gospel. The gospel message is divisive. It's divisive. It's at times contentious.

And if Jesus's own family rejected it, who are we to think that our family won't reject it? Two. In fact, Jesus said in John 15, if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as it own. But because you are not of the world, I chose you out of the world. Therefore, the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will also persecute you. Jesus didn't say these things to scare them.

And they're not here in Mark's gospel to scare us. They're here as an encouragement to us. That the same thing that we will endure as far as the hatefulness and rejection of this world is exactly what our Savior endured.

[ 23 : 22 ] This was a difficult lesson for the disciples. But on the other end of this persecution, how is it that they responded? They counted it joy. Peter, Paul, James, they all wrote, what a joy it is to identify with my Savior in suffering.

What a joy it is. It's hard. It's difficult. But it is a joy to identify with my Savior. There's not another person that would be worthy of this type of treatment than Jesus Christ.

And if my Savior suffered in this way, I'm willing to suffer in this way as well. That's the point that Jesus is getting across to these men. You're going to be rejected. And it's going to be for my sake that you're rejected.

And this was meant as an encouragement, not as a teaching of fear. So we see his reply, his reception, his reply. Finally, we'll see his response, his response.

Now, if we were to evaluate this event by the framework of modern church growth strategists, this would be considered an utter failure, wouldn't it?

[ 24 : 41 ] What good happened in Nazareth? Not much. It wouldn't take long, would it, Brian? Brian's probably been in this area.

You've read enough people to understand that. It wouldn't take long for the experts to find all the things that Jesus did wrong here, right? How he didn't contextualize enough to the people that he was going to.

He should have thought more. He'd been to Nazareth before. He should have thought about it. He should have contextualized better in order to carry out his ministry there and maybe he would have been more successful. Perhaps some would say, well, he was just too direct in his teaching.

He shouldn't have been so hard. He should have given them some other things first, some other things to kind of soothe them and to calm them down and to make them feel better about themselves. And then, once they're on his side, then he could bring in the truth.

Maybe that's what the experts would criticize Jesus for doing. Others might would say that he just didn't do enough things to attract the people.

[ 25 : 40 ] Like he should have just done more miracles. If he would have just done more miracles, he would have put in a good show and entertain them real well. They would have come along his side. But the issue in Nazareth is not an issue with Jesus.

What happened here was not a problem with Jesus's message and it wasn't a problem with Jesus's method. He's perfect. He's perfect. He's perfect. He's the greatest teacher to ever live.

He's God in the flesh. There is nothing about this that could ever be reduced as a problem or wrong or misunderstood or something you should have done differently. The problem wasn't with Jesus.

The problem was the hardness of the hearts of the people in Nazareth. That was the issue, not the preaching, the hardness of heart. And this response comes in actions from Jesus.

How is it that Jesus actionably responded to the hardness of these hearts? Verse five, he could do no mighty work there. He could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

[ 26 : 47 ] Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus was incapable of doing a mighty work. It means that he was unwilling to do a mighty work there.

Omnipotence is not omnipotence unless it is bound only by itself. So we can't say that the only thing that will prevent Jesus from doing his work is a lack of faith.

It is not us. God's work in our life is not at our discretion. Like when we put a little enough, enough faith in there, he responds in this way.

No, he responds on his own. His omnipotence is not limited by anything that I do or anything that I say. He will do his work, okay? But what he has determined to do is withhold his miraculous power in the midst of such hostility and utter rejection.

It's not that he couldn't do the work. It's that he wouldn't do the work. In the case of the Nazarenes, their open rejection meant that there was no purpose for these signs.

[ 28 : 01 ] That's what the miracles did. They weren't for a show. They pointed to the identity of who Jesus is. They pointed people to him in order that they might believe him.

But the Nazarenes had already rejected him. What would be the purpose in the signs at that point? In fact, some have even suggested that it would be morally wrong for Jesus to have responded in any different way.

He intentionally limited his work as an act of judgment. And we see once again a living example of this parable from chapter four. Jesus said, pay attention to what you hear.

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you and still more will be added. For to the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. The people refused to believe. So the opportunity they had was taken away. What opportunity? 30 years of the Son of God living in their midst.

[ 29 : 13 ] And even beyond that, multiple opportunities to him to come and plainly express who he is, demonstrate that in the signs that he performed.

And over and over again, they willfully rejected the true Savior. Over and over and over. So what was Jesus' response?

Judgment. He removed even the opportunity that he had. He never went back to Nazareth.

Nowhere in the scripture does it ever say that Jesus goes back to his hometown. This was it.

It was judgment. Which reminds us that for those who continue to reject the gospel, there is a warning for you in this passage.

Jesus' response to willful rejection is to move on. He didn't stay in town to try to convince them otherwise.

[ 30 : 10 ] He left. And he did no mighty work. And this is how he trained his disciples as well. In fact, if you read a little further down in verse 11, here's what he says.

Whenever you go to a town and they don't receive you, shake off the dust of your feet and walk away. It's a sign of disdain, a sign of judgment. He didn't tell his disciples, stick around as long as you can and try to convince the people.

No. When they reject the gospel, shake off the dust from your feet and walk away. And this is hard to do because you have compassion for people, don't we? We say, well, this isn't right of Jesus. But are you saying that that Jesus actually has less compassion for someone than you? No. It's just a reminder of Hebrews 4. Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart.

The overall story here is heartbreaking. It is. But there is an encouragement in this verse. And then we're going to wrap it up after this, okay? There's an encouragement here. He could do no mighty work there.

[ 31 : 19 ] That next word's important though. What is it? Accept. Accept. Except he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them.

This is important. Mighty here is not a reference to scale. It's not a reference to he was willing to heal some people, but he was unwilling to calm the storm.

That's not the comparison that's being made in this statement. Mighty is in reference to quantity, okay? So, remember in another place, Jesus told his disciples, greater works than these shall you do, okay?

Some people have taken that and said that believers will actually do bigger things, greater things, than what Jesus ever did. Well, that's foolish. The greatest thing you could do is raise yourself from the dead.

Jesus did that. You're not going to do that, okay? None of us are going to do that. That's not what Jesus meant. He was talking about scale and scope. He was talking about scope and extent of what he was going to use his church to do and accomplish in 2,000 years of church history.

[ 32 : 25 ] It's been amazing. Jesus had this small ministry in a small region in Galilee and a little bit in Judea, but look at what the apostles did immediately after that. They went all over the world with this gospel message.

That's what Jesus meant. That's what Mark means here. He's not talking about scale. He's not talking about calming storms and raising the dead. He's talking about how many works, the quantity of works Jesus did.

And this is important because though he could do no great amount of works, there were some people who believed. And the people that believed, even if it was just an imperfect, imperfect, incomplete, ignorant faith, he responded just like he did with the woman with the issue of blood, just like he did with Jairus and Jairus' wife and raising their daughter.

Jesus always responds to faith. Even if it's just a simple openness to consider the things of God, Jesus will respond. Most of the people completely rejected, utter rejection, but there were some people there which encourages me because in our personal witness, we can go day after day after day and share the gospel over and over and over and what are we going to get a lot of times? Utter rejection. Nobody wants to listen. Nobody wants to believe. But don't quit because there will be some people that believe. God's work is always active.

[ 33 : 55 ] He's always doing something. It's how he uses his word. It may not be a huge work that God does through you.

And it may not be immediately visible whatever work he does. It may even be a greater work in you than it will be in others.

But if you faithfully preach the gospel, if you faithfully live out the gospel and love Jesus, he will do a work.

It may be in you, it may be in others, it may be on a large scale, it may be on a small scale. It doesn't matter. He will always do his work. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3, I planted a polis water, but God gave the growth.

God doesn't, he doesn't call you to provide fruit. He calls you to be faithful. And in the midst of that faithfulness, we trust him to be fruitful. So be faithful because he's always working somewhere and in some way.

[ 35 : 04 ] Let me wrap it up this way. Maybe John had this passage or this experience, he would have been there. Maybe John had this event in mind when he wrote his prologue to his gospel.

Remember in John chapter 1, verse 10, John wrote, he was in the world, the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came unto his own and his own people did not receive him.

Maybe John had this in mind, but what I want to point out is how John immediately follows those two verses. Those are verses 10 and 11. Here's what he says in verses 12 and 13. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Yes, a lot of people rejected Jesus. The people that we wouldn't have expected rejected Jesus. But to everyone who did receive him, they became the children of God.

That's the gospel. That's the gospel. that God became a man, lived a perfect life in order to fulfill perfectly the law that we cannot fulfill, and then went to the cross to pay our debt, to pay for the sin of our rejection.

[ 36 : 45 ] And then he rose from the dead to prove that he actually has the power to give us this life. And then he says, if you will just believe in my name, you will be made the children of God.

Forgiveness, eternal life, reconciliation with God in the family of God. And all who received him, John says, received that.

And again, we're reminded of what Jesus said. If you come to me, I will not turn you away. And that's true for us today too.

Believe in his name and you will be saved.