

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY TWENTY

Home, Cynical Home

Matthew 13:53–58

The hills, the lakes, and all Jesus made received Him and obeyed Him. But Jesus came to His own people, “and those who were His own did not receive Him.” Not even His own household welcomed Him.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

AFTER months of nonstop ministry, Jesus decided to pause His hectic pace and travel to His hometown, Nazareth. Why go home? Perhaps, He wanted to check in with His family who had come to see Him earlier (Matthew 12:46–50). Perhaps seeing familiar haunts and visiting old friends sounded refreshing. He needed a break!

Whatever His reasons for the trip, Jesus' departing Capernaum marked a milestone. Matthew's wording: “he left that part of the country” and “returned to Nazareth” (13:53), recalls a previous trip in the opposite direction. To *begin* His ministry, Jesus “left [Nazareth] and moved to Capernaum” (4:13). Circling back to Nazareth signaled an *end*. The first season of Jesus' ministry was over, and the next season was beginning.

The people's warm welcome of Jesus during His early ministry had given way to a wintry cool of opposition. Rejection's chill was in the air. Religious leaders were plotting to kill Jesus, and many of the Galileans had closed their hearts toward Him—even in cities like Capernaum where Jesus performed some of His greatest miracles (11:20–24). Jesus' trip home and the unwelcome reception awaiting Him in Nazareth symbolized the intensifying theme. Jesus' own people were rejecting Him as their Messiah, even those in His own hometown.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Of all Jesus' experiences of rejection, surely the saddest involved family and friends. Jesus was fully human, and the scorn in Nazareth must have hurt deeply. Perhaps you've endured rejection's sting, either from friends or family. Ask the Lord to minister to you as you open this brief but painful chapter of His life. Use the space below to invite Him into your study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

While fully human, Jesus was also fully divine. Amid His heartache, He never lost connection with His heavenly Father and His mission.

The parables of Matthew 13 assure us that all is not lost. Although the kingdom may take an unexpected turn and its King may be misunderstood, scoffed at, and rejected, Jesus will prevail and His kingdom will rise—like a mighty tree from a tiny mustard seed!

Read [Matthew 13:53–58](#) with the dual image of Jesus as human and divine, tender of heart and resolute of will.



Observation: Nazareth from Three Points of View

In the observation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we highlight key locations, nouns, and actions words.¹ Let's use our observation skills to view these verses geographically, relationally, and spiritually.



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Geographically—Matthew 13:53–54a

A Bible map is an important tool in your Bible study toolbox. Find Capernaum in the maps in the back of your Bible or in a Bible atlas. You can also find an excellent online map, “*Ministry of Jesus*,” at insight.org. Then locate Nazareth, southwest of the Sea of Galilee. As the crow flies, the distance between these two points is about 20 miles, but in sandals, the rugged trail from Capernaum to Nazareth is 40 miles of strenuous hiking uphill! What does the distance and difficulty of this trip tell you about Jesus?

Relationally—Matthew 13:54b–57a

According to [Matthew 13:54](#), what was the setting for Jesus to teach and perform miracles? What was the townsfolk’s first response to Him, and what did they want to know?



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These people had watched Jesus grow up from a toddler to manhood. Many had sat beside Him in synagogue classes and celebrated with Him at weddings and festivals. They might have seen Him take over the family business when Joseph died.² What did they know about Him, according to [Matthew 13:55–56](#)? What assumptions were they making?

The townspeople's road to rejecting Jesus started with them being "amazed," and then they "scoffed." Over what ledge did their hard hearts take them, according to [13:57](#)?

Spiritually—Matthew 13:57b–58

How did Jesus respond to their unbelief ([Matthew 13:57–58](#))?

Our own family members can be the most difficult people to convince of our faith in Jesus. "Who do you think you are telling me this?" they sometimes respond. Our conversion is beyond their ability to comprehend. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: The Meaning of Jesus' Trip Home

Let's take another look through these three lenses, and this time focus on the meaning Matthew intended for his readers.

Geographically

In *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll paints the rural features of this small town, in which a few hundred people lived:

Because Nazareth was “off the beaten path,” with no direct access to major highways or trade routes, its people lived simple lives by farming the land and raising cattle. . . . This would have given the inhabitants a rather negative reputation of being “backward.” To be associated with Nazareth would have been like calling someone a “hillbilly” today.³

What insights does this picture of Nazareth give you about Jesus as a person growing up there and His mission to reach folks everywhere? For a reminder of Jesus' compassionate heart, read *Matthew 5:3, 5; 9:12–13; 11:28–29*.

Relationally

Try to view Jesus from the perspective of His siblings and friends. Jesus probably picked up Joseph's trade, becoming one of the town's *tektōn*, which means a *craftsman* who could build or fix anything. If Jesus lived today, we might imagine Him wearing coveralls and work boots, driving a pickup truck loaded with ladders and buckets.

No wonder the people looked at Him slantwise when He came into town acting like a rabbi. His kinfolk thought He had lost His senses by claiming to be the Messiah. Early on, they even tried to take custody of Him, saying, “He's out of his mind” (Mark 3:21).



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Reflect on the people's downward spiral into rejection:

- *Amazement*: They couldn't believe their eyes.
- *Scoffing*: They couldn't get past their assumptions.
- *Taking Offense*: They couldn't bury their pride.
- *Refusal to Believe*: They couldn't open their hearts.

What do you think Matthew wanted us to know about the hurdles some people must overcome to believe in Jesus?

Spiritually

Interestingly, this was Jesus' last appearance in a synagogue in Matthew's gospel. Based on what happened in Nazareth, what do you think Matthew wanted his readers to know about the spiritual condition of the nation and its religious structures?

The old axiom is true: "Familiarity breeds contempt." Jesus was shut down because of the people's unbelief. Their response hindered Him from saying and doing anything else.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: What Changed Their Hearts?

Although Jesus' half-brothers rejected Him at first, they later became believers. James and Jude even went on to write the New Testament epistles that bear their names. What changed their hearts? Let's track their journey of faith.

What scoffing tone of unbelief among the brothers do you pick up in *John 7:1–5*?

What experience did James have after Jesus' death based on *1 Corinthians 15:3–7*? In what ways do you think that experience changed James' mind and heart?

What leadership role did James go on to play in the Jerusalem church, according to Paul's references to him in *Galatians 1:19; 2:9*? (Also, read about James' prominence in the Jerusalem Council in *Acts 15:13–20*.)



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What about Jude? He was among his brothers who gathered in the upper room for prayer after Jesus' ascension (*Acts 1:14*). He also refers to himself at the beginning of his epistle as “a brother of James” (Jude 1), aligning himself with the faith of his brother.

What encouragement do you find in the faith journeys of Jesus' half-brothers?

Do not think that because you have spoken of Christ to your family and it wasn't received, that it will never be meaningful. Your words, no doubt, will never be forgotten.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Let's Respond to What We've Learned

Jesus' own people rejected Him, and we may know what that kind of rejection feels like. To feel like strangers in our own families, to be left out of neighborhood get-togethers, to be made to look the fool—sometimes that's what it's like to be a follower of Christ.

How does the Lord's rejection help you endure the world's opposition toward Christians in general?



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The world's scorn is heavy enough, but who can bear rejection from one's own family? Jesus must have walked away from His hometown with a heavy heart. Can you share your burden with Him? What might Jesus say to you as an encouragement?

Jesus' rejection in Nazareth closes the second part of Matthew's gospel. This somber juncture in Jesus' life is like the end of the middle act of a theatrical play. As the curtain falls, it appears as if all is lost. The antagonists seem to have the upper hand, the hero is on the run, and things appear bleak. But remember, the play isn't over!

In the next part of Matthew, Jesus returns to the Sea of Galilee to perform some of His most amazing miracles—feeding the 5000 (Matthew 14:13–21), walking on water (14:22–36), and revealing His glory at His transfiguration (17:1–9). So continue your journey with Jesus, the King of Kings. The best is yet to come!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, despite the wounds I sometimes receive from those I love most, help me not to get sidetracked in my path of following Your Son. Where else can I go for hope and assurance? Draw me closer to Him as I feel pressure from others to fall away. Keep my spirits up when others push me down. Focus my vision on Christ today, in His name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Because Mary appears alone in the gospels after Jesus' childhood trip to Jerusalem, many scholars believe that Joseph died while Jesus was a youth.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 292.

