

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: The People of Nazareth: A Case Study in Denial, Mark 6

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INTRODUCTION: It had been some time since Jesus had been to his home town of Nazareth. He had been traveling with his disciples and covered many miles. Perhaps he went home to visit his parents, or perhaps he just wanted to rest, or maybe he went to witness to his extended family and friends. Why he went to Nazareth seems rather unimportant, but what happened there was of utmost importance.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:1-6 ¹ *Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.* ² *When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.*

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?” ³ *Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

⁴ *Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.”* ⁵ *He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.* ⁶ *He was amazed at their lack of faith.*

My main point for today:

THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH ARE A CASE STUDY IN DENIAL.

One Christian writer calls this “the unreasonableness and inexcusableness of unbelief in Christ.”

EXPLANATION: In this day, people literally saw Jesus and disbelieved, but why did they not believe he was someone really special? The scripture gives us several clues as to why they did not believe:

1. Clue 1 is the **company he kept**—his disciples—the rag tag group who followed him around. They had no religious pedigree to speak of. They looked like complete renegades and were probably much older than the followers of other rabbis.
2. Clue 2 is **their amazement at his teaching**. You see, Jesus had no religious pedigree either. He had not been trained in the traditional way, that is following a rabbi, yet there he was, behaving like a rabbi. The next clue tells us a bit more about why they were amazed.
3. Clue 3 as to why the people did not believe comes out in **their pessimistic questions**.
4. Clue 4 as to why the people did not believe Jesus was anyone special was **the question, “Isn’t this the carpenter?”** They couldn’t believe anyone whose trade was carpentry could be anything more.

EXPLANATION: Now let’s answer the questions:

- *Where did this man get these things?* They failed to acknowledge he got it all from God, not the teachings of a man.
- *What’s this wisdom that has been given him?* They failed to see Jesus had wisdom from God, which brought about a new and better way to meet God—through him (Jesus) and no longer through the Law of Moses.
- *What are these miracles he is performing?* They failed to find joy in the healing of the sick, the casting out of the demons, and the raising of Jarius’ daughter from the dead. This is really the dumbest of all the questions. Note: There was no disagreement the miracles actually happened, just a question of what the miracles are.

The miracles themselves answered the question. *What are these miracles he is performing?* I can’t think of any other answers to the question other than

“They are miracles.” You can’t really argue with a miracle, can you? I guess some people can. It’s as if they said, “Let’s forget about the miracle and just ask a divisive question: ‘What are these miracles?’”

- Why the people did not believe Jesus was anyone special was the question “*Isn’t this the carpenter?*” Their thought was—the carpenter could do nothing more than be a carpenter. It was the way he was raised. He wasn’t part of the elite educated class. He was just a simple carpenter, they thought.

This is the age old story of people not believing the home town kid could ever be anyone great. But, all great people started somewhere. Sometime greatness has roots of greatness, and sometimes greatness has roots of humble simplicity.

Social rank has absolutely nothing to do with a person’s value or his or her ability to have spiritual insight.

They failed to acknowledge Jesus was a carpenter of another sort. He was no longer building with wood. He was building a spiritual kingdom.

Jesus would later say, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19). You know, it would take a builder to do that.

Later on, he will say he’s going to heaven to build a place for us (John 14:3).

SCRIPTURE: Act 4:10-12 The scripture tells us in Acts 4 when Peter and John were defending their position before the counsel...¹⁰ *then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before healed.* ¹¹ *Jesus is*

*“the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.”*

¹² *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

EXPLANATION: These are builders' terms. The people failed to see Jesus was still a carpenter. Only now, he was building a spiritual kingdom, and in this day, his main priority was building a solid foundation—the foundation of equipping of his disciples and preparing them for the future of spreading the Gospel without him.

These people were living in denial of who Jesus was. They saw him, and they'd heard about the fame of his miracles. Verse five tells us he actually healed some people, which means some people witnessed the miracles first-hand. They couldn't deny Jesus was real because they heard his voice and saw his face.

APPLICATION: Fast forward to today: There are people today who think of Jesus in the same way as the people in his hometown. They accept Jesus was a real man who walked the earth, but they refuse to believe he was anyone special.

And, then, there are people who not only deny the miracles but deny Jesus ever lived. These people live in double denial. You know, it's easy to believe Jesus never did anything special if you believe Jesus never lived. I guess you can trick your mind into believing anything.

TRUTH: Now let's go back and see why they should not have been in denial about Jesus' greatness.

- He came from a good family.
- He grew up never doing anything wrong.
- He taught in the temple when he was a boy.
- He unified a group of men who came from extremely different backgrounds.
- His reputation of miracles preceded his arrival.
- And, he taught in the temple on the Sabbath.

They were free to decide for themselves the validity of Jesus' ministry, but apparently, they checked their brains at the door, which let their loud mouths and doubting overtake any virtuous thoughts.

ILLUSTRATION: It's interesting how sometimes when we look for an expert, we think we have to search far away. A friend of mine aspired to be a school principal.

He told me in order for him to be a principal in the school system where he taught, he would have to move away and apply for the job when it came open because the school board would never consider hiring someone from within.

People shouldn't overlook the obvious. There's no need to go on a nationwide search if the need you have can be filled locally.

EXPLANATION: Think about the people of Nazareth. They were Jews looking forward to the Messiah coming to them some day. And, yet there he was, right in front of them, and they completely denied him. They thought, "He's just a local person who grew up here. He's just a commoner and a poor carpenter." You see, they expected an earthly king.

And, what was the result of their unbelief? They inhibited much of the work of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:5 ⁵*He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.*

CONCLUSION: In the spiritual realm, there is direct correlation between people's faith, or lack thereof, and the Lord doing his work or not doing his work.

Notice the unbelief of the people did not completely shut down Jesus' work, but it did slow him down.

Where does this leave you today? Are you going to be like the people in Nazareth and deny that Jesus is the Christ? Are you going to question the historical record and the fact that billions of people throughout human history have claimed this man has changed their lives? To deny him would be terribly unwise, and it brings with it eternal consequences.

You can know Jesus Christ today. God took on human flesh all those years ago and became a person, subject to all the temptations of man, but he yielded to none of them. And, then he died on that cross and rose again.

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:1-2 ¹*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* ²*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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