

of God, the dotted line of evil, because the whole world lies in the evil one, but only by the permissive will of a sovereign God who has the last word. (1 Jn. 5:19) But the third thing to notice is crucial: within the evil world God has established a beachhead: spiritual Israel = the Church today. The fourth detail is the final and permanent separation of all evil doers into one place reserved for them: even Hell is positive proof of the power and reality of God's government. Note, contemporaneously, the glorious revelation of the people of God enjoying the perfect rule of the eternal Kingdom of God.

For further notes on the Kingdom and the great sermon in parables, see especially Seth Wilson's Special Study, *Mark* (Bible Study Textbook Series, pp. 499-506: "What the Kingdom is Like" and "Treasures of the Kingdom") and R.C. Foster's *Middle Period*, pp. 79ff.

## Section 32

### JESUS IS REFUSED BY HIS OWN AT NAZARETH.

TEXT: 13:54-58  
(Parallel: Mark 6:1-6)

54 And coming 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 Joseph, 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 honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What is so significant about the amazement of these people, given the fact that it is caused by the miracles and message of Jesus?
- b. Why do you think that the Nazarenes did not know the answer

- to their own question: "Where did He get all this wisdom and these miracles?"
- c. Analyze the reasons why the Nazarenes were "caused to stumble" in Jesus.
  - d. Now, if causing someone to stumble is regarded by the NT as sin, how can you justify Jesus' doing precisely that? The Scripture says that the Nazarenes were scandalized by Jesus.
  - e. One of the accusations we often make against faith miracle workers today is that too often their miracles do not seem to want to occur in the presence of skeptics, unbelievers or other critical eyes. Here Jesus did not do many miracles because of the Nazarene's unbelief. Nay, worse, Mark (6:5) actually affirms that the Lord **COULD NOT** do any miracles in Nazareth. Does faith—or is it credulity?—in the miracle worker or in the recipient of the miracle create miracle-working power? Perhaps Jesus was limited by the same weakness and failure as modern fake healers. What is your explanation?
  - f. What is the importance here of the mention of Jesus' brothers and sisters?

### PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Jesus left Capernaum and went to His own hometown, Nazareth. His disciples accompanied Him. On the sabbath He began to teach the folk in the local synagogue. Many who listened to Him were astonished and asked, "Where did this man get all this wisdom? What great wisdom He has! What mighty works are done by Him! Is not this the carpenter, the son of the carpenter? Is not his mother called Mary? Are not his brothers named James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters here with us? Where, then, did he get all this?" So they were shocked at Him.

But Jesus commented to them, "No prophet is left unhonored, except in his own hometown, among his own kin, and in his own house."

And He could not do many mighty miracles in Nazareth, because of their unbelief, except that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. He marveled because of their unbelief.

## SUMMARY

Jesus tried again to win His own hometown to discipleship. The result was superficial amazement at His supernatural wisdom and miracles, but no real conviction of His true position as God's Prophet. The Nazarenes were shocked at Jesus; He marveled at their continued unbelief. The townspeople gave Him little or no opportunity to work great miracles on their behalf.

## NOTES

Before attempting to comment on this section, it is well to ask whether it be the same incident as that recorded by Luke (4:16-30). Some commentaries identify the two accounts and create thereby unnecessary problems for the reader. The coincidences which make the identification appear possible are three:

1. In both accounts the Nazarenes marveled at Jesus' ability. (Mt. 13:54b = Mk. 6:2, cf. Lk. 4:22) Is this psychologically credible especially the second time, if there were two visits? Yes, because, however well they may have remembered a supposed first visit to Nazareth at the beginning of His ministry (i.e., Lk. 4:16-30), several new factors would have contributed to occasion their astonishment: His far greater popularity in Galilee is now a fact that demanded reappraisal of His claims. New to them also would be His surprising courage in returning after the attempt on His life on His last visit, as well as the loving meekness of His manner, in contrast to their meanness, and His magnanimity in not holding their deeds against them. If "time heals things," then Jesus' absence from Nazareth for a sufficiently considerable interval would render a repetition of some of the same surprise quite credible.
2. In both accounts the Nazarenes objected to Jesus' pretended authority, because He was the son of Joseph the carpenter. (Mt. 13:55 = Mk. 6:3; cf. Lk. 4:22b) But this is only natural, since it is the basis of their refusal no matter how many times He visited there.
3. Would Jesus on two separate visits have reiterated the proverb? Although not exactly verbatim, the wording is close enough. (Mt. 13:57b = Mk. 6:4, cf. Lk. 4:24) Yes, the reverting to this proverb is not exceptional, since the general circumstances of the two visits

to the same hometown could have evoked the same general reaction in Jesus. In fact, the deliberate hammering on this particular motto may indicate Jesus' aim to reach a far higher goal than a mere accounting for local prejudices. (See below on 13:57b.)

Nevertheless, the differences are more marked than these supposed likenesses:

#### THE NARRATIVE OF MATTHEW AND MARK

1. Mark links this visit to Nazareth with the events around Capernaum following the great Parables Sermon, the trip to Gerasa and return to Capernaum. Matthew, having already told this, links this trip to Nazareth more loosely after the Parables Sermon. But these events are admittedly late in the Galilean ministry.
2. Mark notices the presence of Jesus' disciples on this visit, a natural feature to be expected, as Jesus has now developed His program more fully since His earlier visit, including a following. This argument cannot be conclusive, since Matthew is silent about disciples here, and his account alone cannot argue their absence any more than can Luke's earlier story (Lk. 4:16-30).
3. Matthew notices the paucity of miracles while Mark mentions a few.

#### THE NARRATIVE OF LUKE

Luke gives the definite impression that he is narrating an incident early in the Galilean ministry of Jesus shortly after His baptism and temptations.

Luke is silent about disciples on Jesus' first visit to Nazareth, a fact that cannot militate against their possible presence. Nevertheless, the very progress of His relationship to His immediate followers at that early period indicates that He may not yet have called them to personal discipleship. (See Lk. 5:1-11, 27-32.)

Luke not only records no miracles, but cites Jesus' words about Elijah and Elisha that seem to preclude His having done any before entering the synagogue. Certainly, none were recorded as done later.

4. Matthew and Mark indicate no specific duration of His visit to Nazareth, but they imply at least some time to do a few miracles. Luke tells how in the synagogue an attempt was made on His life from which He narrowly escaped by walking through the crowd and departing immediately.

These differences are explicable on the basis of Jesus' love for His own townspeople: is it like Jesus to have entirely abandoned even Nazareth after one rejection? Second, Jesus' growing popularity throughout Galilee and the healing of time might have counselled a second visit because of changed circumstances. Although time did not heal their unbelief, it may have let their offended pride cool enough to permit Him to try again.

13:54 **Coming into his own country**, as Mark connects it, means leaving the unwanted excitement around Capernaum where Jesus had just completed a series of steps to keep tight reins on His own popularity:

1. The Great Sermon in Parables intended to hide vital truth from any but the most understanding disciples. (Mt. 13:1-53; Mk. 4:1-34; Lk. 8:4ff)
2. The withdrawal from the Capernaum crowds by a stormy voyage to Gerasa and, hopefully, some tranquility was interrupted by Gerasene fearful reluctance. (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39)
3. Then followed the return to Capernaum and the great crowds, the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage, and the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and the injunction to the parents to avoid publicity. (Mt. 9:1, 18-26; Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 8:40-56)
4. Although He sternly ordered two healed blind men not to publish the news of their healing, they disobeyed. (Mt. 9:27-31)
5. The crowds marvelled yet more when He freed a dumb demoniac. (Mt. 9:32-34)

These pressures on Jesus may have determined His decision to reach an area where His impopularity would have granted a small respite from the constant thronging of people. Nazareth suited His requirements ideally, since the earlier disapprobation of His townsmen had been previously encountered. (Lk. 4:16-30) But Jesus' return to Nazareth is no mere avoidance of Capernaum, as if He had nowhere else to go. He strode into Nazareth, because He knew His people and loved them, despite their sins, pride and prejudices. He

had remained away from them to let them study Him at long range while He preached and healed all over Galilee. Now He must return once more to teach them, work among them and give them fresh glimpses of His true identity.

**Coming into his own country He taught them in their synagogue.** Matthew's imperfect tense (*edidasken*) does not in this case mean to suggest that He kept this up for some time, because this is an example of the inchoative imperfect which describes an action as recently, or just begun, being in its first stages. (See Robertson-Davis, *Short Grammar*, 300; Blass-Debrunner, 169, sec. 326 call it "conative imperfect") So, Mark's expression, "he began to teach," is only the more explicit equivalent of Matthew's idiom.

So earnest and powerful, so winsome and true was His message that its immediate effect was the astonishment of the audience. But this amazement is not the marveling that leads to joyous acceptance. It arose, rather, out of what they suppose to be perfect familiarity with Jesus: they think they know Him, as their questions reveal afterward. Their perplexity, expressed in the question: **Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?**, arises out of the apparent incongruity between what they thought they knew about Him and what they were even then experiencing with their own senses. But He was, in reality, a perfect Stranger. Edersheim (*Life*, I, 636ff) rightly notices that the very events of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth were hidden from the Nazarenes, even as His earthly development was unseen by the Bethlehemites. But this fact in no way lessens the responsibility of both cities to test the claims of Jesus. In fact, the ignorance of Nazareth concerning the great fact of the Incarnation is no warrant for their unbelief. It should, rather, have spurred them on to examine all the more critically His claims in the light of His miraculous credentials. If they are curious enough to ask this kind of question, which itself contains such damaging admissions on their part, let them seek their proper answers! There was no denying that **this man has this wisdom and these mighty works are wrought by his hands!** Since their knowledge of these deeds is largely based on hearsay evidence filtering back into Nazareth from nearly every village in Galilee,—apparently He worked no miracle in His hometown prior to this historical moment,—is it credible that the popular opinions of their fellow Galileans, that Jesus might possibly be the Christ, should not also have been breathed about? They were taken aback, not because of His grace in speaking or because of the truth of His doctrine, but that these virtues should be His. Had they not

been wilfully blind, they should have understood that ANYONE so demonstrably without the preparation of academic education who proves himself so amply in possession of such unmatched wisdom and such glorious power MUST have been sent and empowered by God. Their culpability is the more inexcusable because not only were they well aware of *these mighty works*, but before He left town, they were even to witness "the healing of a few sick folk." (Mk. 6:5) Even when they saw it, they did not afterward repent and believe Him. (Cf. Mt. 21:28-32) Were they but to pronounce Him Christ, they would arrive immediately at the only satisfactory answer to their questions, but they supposed the matter settled merely by voicing a few insinuating questions.

**13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son?** For this oblique reference to Joseph, Mark has only: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary . . .?" Did Jesus so establish Himself as a worker in Nazareth during His pre-ministry days that His acquaintances remember Joseph only in passing as the man whose carpentry his son took over? Where then is Joseph? His passing may be implied in his not being mentioned in any of the events immediately concerning Jesus' family following the return to Nazareth after Jesus' birth. (Cf. Mt. 1:16, 18-20, 24; 2:13; Lk. 1:27; 2:4, 16, 33, 43; 3:23; 4:22; Jn. 1:45; 6:42 are the only references to Joseph by name in Scripture.) His absence on some occasions may be explained on grounds other than his death, for example, where business demanded that he be elsewhere when Mary and her sons visited Jesus. (Mt. 12:46; Lk. 8:19) However, if Joseph were still alive during Jesus' last visit, the unusual phrasing of some Nazarene's question according to Mark, is remarkable.

**Is not his mother called Mary?** "Is not this . . . the son of Mary . . .?" (Mk. 6:3) The simplest reading of either of these versions would lead the uncomplicated reader to think the Nazarenes are simply confirming by a negative question expecting a positive answer what they think they know about Jesus. But, some, remembering it somehow un-Jewish to identify a man by mentioning his mother's name, think Mark to be pointing to some peculiar fact.

1. These words in the mouth of the Nazarenes, says McMillan (*Mark*, 76) smell of an early rumor circulating to the effect that Jesus was illegitimate, but his proof-texts (e.g., Jn. 8:41; 9:29, etc.) do not substantiate this, being open to other interpretations. Rather, as discussed at Mt. 1:24, the very circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, in the wisdom of God, forestalled such an accusation on the

- part of the Nazarenes. Further, Matthew's text, parallel to Mark, actually quotes the Nazarenes themselves as describing Jesus as "the carpenter's son," before ever mentioning Mary. If the Nazarenes believe Jesus to be Joseph's son, there can be no suspicion of illegitimacy here. Again, that these words indicate no such rumor is proved by their very vagueness, if such an insinuation were intended. Jesus' detractors did not mince words when resorting to name-calling! (Cf. Jn. 8:48, 52; 7:20; 10:20; Mk. 3:21, 22, 30; Mt. 10:25; 11:18, 19)
2. Is Mark's special wording intended to convey the concept of the Virgin Birth? That is, by saying, "Is not this . . . the son of Mary?" is he not eliminating Joseph as Jesus' real father in the same sense that Mary is His real mother? No, because Mark is citing the objections made by the Nazarenes on the basis of what they considered common knowledge. These words, far from containing Mark's doctrine, are in fact not really his at all.
  3. An even simpler solution for the Marcan phenomenon is available: Mark mentions only Jesus' mother, because the people he is quoting could not, for some reason, refer directly to Joseph as any longer an active participant in Nazareth's life. Is he only remembered by some (cf. Matthew's "the son of the carpenter"), but absent from immediate concern, whereas Mary, being still alive, is very much present in their thinking? Mark's words, rather than express editorializing, may well reflect the precise situation in Nazareth and suggest the well-nigh universal supposition that Joseph had been long dead.

Contrary to Plummer, (*Matthew*, 199), this difference in the form of the questions does not at all represent redactional changes by Matthew, but rather the natural, rapid-fire questioning of excited people.

**Are not his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?** See the Special Study, "The Brethren of the Lord" after this chapter. But why do the Nazarenes bother to mention these men by name? They are proudly proving thereby to be able to remember them, since these brothers had moved to Capernaum with Jesus some time earlier. (See on Mt. 4:13; Cf. Jn. 2:12.) By proving their ability to name them one by one, they think they have thereby explained Jesus too: could He possibly be any different from those named?

13:56 **And are not all his sisters here with us?** Did these girls marry Nazarenes and so not move with Jesus' mother and brothers to Capernaum with Him? How many ladies are implied in "all his sisters"



is unknown, but, when considered as all younger than Jesus the first-born and included with four baby brothers, they certainly represented a houseful for Jesus and His (widowed?) mother. Because of the poignant note in Jesus' sad proverb: "A prophet is not without honor except . . . among his own kin, and in his own house," some have wondered whether the sisters, fearing reprisals from their townsmen who had so bitterly rejected Jesus earlier, had sought to disassociate themselves from Him, because of His apparently unwarranted assumption of superiority over His own people.

The surprise expressed by these Nazarenes in their barrage of questions indicates just how perfectly normal must have been the entire course of Jesus' life and development there. This does not deny the deep-running differences that only Mary could have known. Nevertheless, their astonishment serves to mark the perfect humanity of His maturity in wisdom and physical stature to the delight of God and man. (Lk. 2:40, 52) For, if the Nazarenes who knew His history among them best, humanly speaking, could trace no abnormality in His boyhood conduct, we are right to conclude that

1. He did no miracles as a boy, contrary to the fantastic narrations of the apocryphal gospels. His first miracle was done at Cana of Galilee and not sooner. (Jn. 2:11)
2. His anointing by the Spirit at His baptism really signalled the beginning of His Messianic mission, after He left Nazareth a few days prior. (Ac. 10:37, 38) None of His days at Nazareth before this anointing should be considered as having any relation to that commission except as they gave Him time and opportunity to mature as a perfect human being. (Cf. Lk. 2:40, 52)
3. The doctrine of Jesus' perfect humanity (cf. Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15; 5:7, 8; Phil. 2:8) passed the test of His closest acquaintances. The Nazarenes could not tell the difference between Jesus and His four brothers and all His sisters. His humanity was convincingly real to them.
4. Their rhetorical questions are devastating to any theory of perpetual virginity for Mary, because they imply the common knowledge that Jesus is in no way different from His brothers, sisters, mother or father. Had there been some suspicion that they were but cousins, their questions would not have been able to imply so much, since He would, in that case, not have been of the same family as the brothers, hence He could have potentially been actually superior and their own argument falls. In fact, they use

the words "son," "mother" and "sisters" in their normal connotation. Why should they be thought to have changed to a larger range of meaning when they speak of His "brothers"?

13:57 **And they were offended in him.** "By what right does the village carpenter, whom we have known all our lives, rise to speak to us with an authority superior to the learned rabbis?" Indeed, what right? Their former astonishment hardened into scandal. He did not fit the slot they had carved for Him. So, rather than reject their categories, they rejected Him. But in so doing, they left themselves without any accounting for His wisdom and works, real facts that, despite the fact that they surpassed human understanding, were to be believed. Their shock, indignation and hurt was not any whit less real because Jesus, far from intending them any spiritual damage, aimed only at their eternal life and peace. Their stumbling into sin, further obstinacy and unbelief, could not be helped by Jesus, and this fact leads us to see that stumbling-blocks are of two types:

1. Sinners being offended by righteous men in the pursuit of righteousness whose godliness itself is the cause of pain, indignation, shock or disgust. Jesus, in the pursuit of His messianic mission, could not help becoming the world's greatest stumbling block! (Lk. 2:34; Mt. 21:44 = Lk. 20:18; 1 Pt. 2:6-8 = Isa. 8:14, 15; see notes on Mt. 11:6).
2. Weak, or relatively innocent people are offended by supposedly righteous men in the pursuit of their own comfort, exercising their rights or freedom while quite unconcerned for the conscience of others. (Cf. Notes on Mt. 18:5-9; Ro. 14:1—15:7; 1 Co. 6:12—11:1)

Ironically, the Nazarenes mistakenly reputed Jesus to be a stumbling block of the latter type, only to splatter their lives against the Rock of Ages!

The Nazarenes blundered by trying to account for Jesus by discussing His quite human family, but they omitted from the account the one ingredient which, though they could not have known it, would have explained Him: the Incarnation. Lest we too stumble over Jesus, we must appreciate how gross is the blunder involved in attempting to explain Him by ordinary rules. We are tempted to think that unless or until we are able to fathom the mystery of God, or, at least, solve the problem of Jesus Christ, we shall not surrender to Him. Nevertheless, even a perfect intellectual solution would not bow our heads in submission since common canons permit us to measure

other people every day, yet we never throw ourselves at their feet to become their servants. In fact, were we to succeed in reducing the Lord's Christ to a philosophical formula or a mathematical equation, He would then be unneeded, because, in our conceit, we would have thought to understand Him perfectly. He would be then useless to us as Master and Lord, since we would have then reduced Him to our own self-created categories. But His Incarnation and His Atonement are facts to be believed on the evidence He gives us of their truth, not propositions for debate the issue of which is of little or no consequence. Rather than discredit the evidence because of our failure perfectly to comprehend, let us postpone debate and submit! After all, what is faith for, if we must walk by sight?

Our scandal-level, i.e., that point at which we too are most liable to be shocked, disgusted or hurt by Jesus, is really that point in our thinking at which Jesus holds no surprises for us anymore. When our theology will have succeeded in saying all there is to know about Him, we are perfectly set up for our big disappointment in Him. We are Christians, wrote Morgan (*Matthew*, 181ff), because Jesus towers above us, impresses us, baffles us, eludes us, yet enwraps us with love and thrills us with power. We are Christians in the presence of the Infinite Mystery, infinitely more than in the presence of things that can be perfectly explained.

**But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.** Two thrusts are noticeable in Jesus' use of this proverb:

1. He cites to the Nazarenes this true psychological observation, and by so doing, shows them that, humanly speaking, He understands them. It is genuinely difficult to appreciate the surpassing importance and real accomplishments of someone whose entire growth and development occurred before our eyes. We do have problems accepting the profound changes in people with whom we think ourselves perfectly familiar. So, the Lord, perfectly familiar with His own people, because He really knew their weakness and need, in heart-warming understanding and generous mercy, expresses this solidarity with them in their difficulty.
2. But the very proverb He selected so to express Himself speaks volumes. He could have said, "A successful man is not without honor, etc.," and have communicated the above-mentioned human comprehension. Instead, His choice of wording may be nothing less than the earnest challenge to His dear acquaintances to

re-examine the evidences that would have led them to see Him as a PROPHET. They might not understand Him to be God's Son, rather than Joseph and Mary's boy, but even so, let them think of Him as Joseph's Son the PROPHET! Let them study His message, accept His credentials as proving His right to reveal God's message like any other mighty prophet born of human parents but called by God! By this approach they might eventually be convinced to bow in humble submission of their divine Townsman. (Cf. Jesus' use of a similar approach with Judean enemies, Jn. 10:37, 38 and with His most intimate followers, Jn. 14:10, 11.)

**13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.** If it be true that faith is that positive contact which man makes with God by abandoning his self-justifications, if it be that positive living in conformity with the convictions he has about Him, then we see why these Nazarenes' unbelief caused them to stay away from Jesus. They made no contact with Him, so He did not force them to accept unwanted miracles. If they did not believe Him enough to come bringing their sick to them or ask Him to help them, then "He could do no mighty work there." (Mk. 6:6) Jesus could truly say, "I just could not help them, because they would not let me!"

Further, since Jesus had chosen to limit Himself to help only those willing to receive His blessing, He deliberately did not force either their belief or acceptance of His help. The seemingly objectionable statement of Mark ("He could do no mighty work there.") reflects only this moral commitment, not any objective ability that somehow failed in Nazareth. Rather, here is written the meekness of the Son of God: we would have been sorely tempted to rip off some stupendous wonder "just to show them," but Jesus stood firm. Again, the Lord refused to undersell the evidential value of a single healing! If the imposition of hands on a few sick folk to heal them (Mk. 6:5) will not produce the unshakeable conviction that God has sent Jesus, no mere escalation of signs and wonders could be hoped to produce it. Nor is He willing to discount the importance of believing the true testimony of others who carried the news of His miracles to Nazareth. (Cf. 13:54; Lk. 4:23)

Not only **did Jesus not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief**, but He marveled because of it. (Mk. 6:6) See notes on 8:10 where Jesus marveled at the great faith of the Roman centurion. There, marveling is described as implying some ignorance of that about which one feels genuine surprise. But who can complain if JESUS CHOSE NOT TO KNOW who would eventually believe or

disbelieve Him? This very choice, itself part of the mystery of incarnation, lets Him react genuinely, because He is truly overjoyed at excitingly real faith, or stunned and grieved at obstinate unbelief. He was astounded as He heard their reaction, because their unbelief was so unreasonable. Even though they admitted the premises for the divine origin of His mission and message, they resolutely denied the obvious conclusion to which these premises must necessarily lead.

Although Jesus' own doctrine that the quality of one's heart affects his receptivity to the truth had already been expounded in the Parables of the Kingdom, (Mt. 13:1-53), this did not alleviate His heartbreak when He too had to live with that reality embodied in the wayside hearts of His old friends and fellow townsmen. Here, again, we see that the atmosphere which a congregation brings to a message deeply affects its effectiveness, being either a stone wall of hostility through which the message cannot penetrate, or a friendly expectancy that can turn the simplest testimony into soul-stirring eloquence. Many a message has been absolutely ruined, not because it was not true and needed, but due to prejudices against the speaker. And Jesus faced this too—in His own hometown.

### FACT QUESTIONS

1. Is this event but another version of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth as recorded in Luke 4:16-30? What are the similarities and differences?
2. What is the point of the rhetorical questions asked by the Nazarenes in reference to Jesus' family?
3. What damaging evidence against the theory of the perpetual virginity of Mary is unconsciously provided by the Nazarenes' questions in this section?
4. Did Jesus do any miracles at Nazareth? How do you know?
5. Explain how the Nazarenes "took offense at Him."
6. Name Jesus' brothers.
7. How many sisters did Jesus have?
8. How did the Nazarenes admit as a matter of fact the miracles that Jesus did? What, then, did they reject?
9. What proverb did Jesus cite as the explanation of the Nazarenes' rejection of His person and ministry?
10. According to the best information available in the NT, how many times did Jesus visit the Nazareth synagogue after the beginning

- of His ministry? What was the response each time?
11. Explain how Jesus could marvel at the unbelief of His townspeople. Did their unbelief surprise Him? If so, how? If not, why not?

### SPECIAL STUDY: THE BRETHERN OF THE LORD

What is the real purpose of this study? Is it to discover from an examination of the best evidence available to us, whether the men who are entitled in Scripture "the brethren of the Lord," were real, natural half-brothers of Jesus, being sons of Mary; or whether they were step-brothers, being sons of Joseph by a former wife before espousing Mary; or whether they were cousins, being sons of Alphaeus (or Clopas), Joseph's brother (or else, sons of Mary of Clopas, sister of Mary, Joseph's wife)? Is this research into the semi-obscure facts surrounding the life of our Lord only for academic discussion? What could be gained by a knowledge of the answer to the proposed questions? Beyond mere acquaintance with the facts, are we any richer morally?

Or is it the purpose of such a study to affirm or deny the perpetual virginity of Mary as a dogma affirmed by the Roman Catholic denomination? Even if, after accurate study, one concludes that Mary did, in fact, have no other children after the birth of Jesus, and that the reputed "brethren of the Lord" were, in fact, sons of Joseph by a former wife named Hannah, what is gained for the Catholic position, or what is lost for those who previously objected to the idea (not to say, doctrine or dogma) of the perpetual virginity of Mary?

Or is the question even correctly put in that fashion? Could we not ask ourselves, what USE is to be made of the supposed perpetual virginity? What is the FUNCTION of such a pretended fact?

So the importance or value of this study does not lie so much in enriching our information about the private life and relations of Jesus, as in dealing with the Catholic apologists who would elevate Mary to a superhuman plane. To do this they must demonstrate three fundamental propositions, one of which this study touches directly:

1. "Mary was herself conceived without sin," or the dogma of the immaculate conception;