

Dispelling Religious Mindsets About Who Jesus Is

“He went away from there and came into His own country. And His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get this? What is this wisdom that is given Him, that even miracles are done by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him” (Mark 6:1-3).

Did you ever have a time in grade school when the teacher left the room unsupervised and one of your classmates sneaked to the blackboard, drew a stick-figure person, and wrote the word “teacher” at the bottom?

We call that stick figure a caricature. In all likelihood the teacher was an attractive young woman with a great love and zest for life, but the student saw her as a mean, demanding old grouch. The caricature was a total misrepresentation of who she was.

That’s where a lot of people are in relation to Jesus. Their image of Him may come from negative contacts with the church, those professing to follow Him, or the attitudes of those who don’t know Him. So, they have embraced a view of Jesus that’s far different than reality.

That is what happened at Nazareth. Jesus originally left Nazareth and adopted a new hometown of Capernaum because Nazareth was a small place tucked in the hills, off the beaten path, while Capernaum was a major city located on the northeastern shore of the Lake of Galilee. It was a city thriving with commerce through which passed a major road.

Jesus took the long climb from 650 feet below sea level up to the hill top town of Nazareth, a small town with a precipice overlooking what we now call the valley of Armageddon. With Him were his disciples—quite an entourage for a small village.

The reaction by many in the synagogue was amazement. They hadn't seen this side of Jesus in the 30 years He had lived among them. So they initially wanted to know two things: the source of His knowledge ("Where did this man get these things?") and the explanation for His miracles—which, interestingly, they attributed to His wisdom.

But that wasn't all that was on their minds. They asked three more questions.

The first question had to do with His vocation: "Isn't this the carpenter?" The underlying Greek word is teknon, and its most frequent use is related to a stonemason rather than a woodworker. Their question tells us that Jesus didn't spend His "hidden" years in isolation as a monk would, nor in the solitude of study as would a theological student. He worked a trade and earned a living. There was nothing in His vocation as a mason or carpenter that intimated He held the potential of teaching and doing miracles.

The second and third questions had to do with His mother (the absence of reference to Joseph probably means that he was deceased), his four brothers, and at least two sisters (plural is used for sisters). This lays to rest the idea that Mary was a perpetual virgin. Clearly, she had at least six more children after Jesus.

The citizens of Nazareth took offense at Jesus because they weren't willing to admit new evidence. They preferred to stay with their caricature of Jesus rather than open their hearts and minds to the evidence He presented.

A Prayer: Lord Jesus, may I never lock You in the box of my small mind or interpret You by the filter of my

preconceptions. May my view of You never be small, and may I never take offense at You.

*Excerpted from Dr. Wood's book Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources. **George O. Wood** is the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. For the original article, visit .*