

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Unbelief At Nazareth

By

Rev. Todd W. Allen

Mark 6:1-6

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Sir Isaac Newton believed the Bible and was a committed Christian. He made a replica of our solar system in miniature. In the center was the sun with all the planets revolving around it in their various proximities. A scientist entered Newton's study one day and exclaimed, "My! What an exquisite thing this is! Who made it? "Nobody!" replied Newton to the questioner who was an unbeliever. "You must think I am a fool. Of course somebody made it, and he is a genius." Laying aside his book, Newton arose and laid a hand on his friend's shoulder and said: "This thing is but a puny imitation of a much grander system whose laws you and I know, and I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer and maker; yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design is taken has come into being without either designer or maker. Now tell me, by what sort of reasoning do you reach such incongruous conclusions?"

The American magazine once published an article giving a businessman's statement of why he knows there is a God. He had been frankly facing the wonders of the stars and planets, their system and order; then he said, "It takes a girl in our factory two days to learn to put the seventeen parts of a meat chopper together. It may be that these millions of worlds, each with its separate orbit, all balanced so wonderfully in space – it may be they just happened; it may be that by a billion years of tumbling about they finally arranged themselves. I don't know. I am merely a plain manufacturer of cutlery. But this I know, that you can shake the seventeen parts of a meat chopper around in a washtub for the next seventeen billion years and you'll never have a meat chopper.

Popular education once recognized Christianity as its mother, yet the academic world has somehow come to treat supernatural religion as a disaffected mother-in-law and finally as an outlaw. -- Carl F.H. Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself*. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 14.

Unbelief is puzzlement. At Nazareth Jesus was said to "wonder" at their unbelief. There is something negative and unreal about unbelief. It produces nothing, improves nothing and helps nobody.

Unbelief provokes God. The Israelites in the wilderness were unbelieving and spoke against God, saying, **"Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? ² Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing; Can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?"** Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath; And a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also mounted against Israel, Because they did not believe in God

22 And did not trust in His

23 salvation. *Psa. 78:19-22*

In that Psalm it is recounted how God provided water and food from heaven to meet their needs, yet still they did not believe in His wonderful works and because of their unbelief they ended their days in futility and they died in sudden terror.

What a sad commentary on that generation. Faith on the other hand is a great boon and benefit All that we do is because we believe something. As Robert Dabney says in his lecture on faith, "Everything man does is because he believes something. Faith, in its widest sense, is the mainspring of man's whole activity. Every volition arises from a belief, and none can arise without it." (Dabney Lectures p 612)

We do not eat a meal without faith that it will do us good and that it is not poisoned. When you board an airplane you may have a shaky faith or a strong faith, but there must be faith for you to step on board. If you do not believe you will arrive at your destination you will not fly in an airplane. There must be faith in the airline, the pilot

and crew, the safety of the aircraft, the competence of the ground crew, plus the belief that Providence will favor your journey. If you believe in God you may say a prayer too. But without faith you will not go.

Think of anything you have ever done or are now doing and if you will trace back your motivation it was or is due to some faith that you could do it.

If you go to school it is because you have faith that you can make it. If you drop out it is because you don't think you can make it or there is some other faith motivation to do something else. If you start a job it is because you believe you can succeed in that job. Faith is the mainspring of all that you attempt to do.

Scripture says that **without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Heb. 11:6**

It tells us in Revelation 21:8 **"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**

Rev. 21:8

Unfortunately, unbelievers do not believe that there is such a place as the lake of fire. For had they even believed that it might have been the means of their coming to faith. Inducements to faith can be both pleasant and unpleasant.

We see an example of unbelief as Jesus goes back to his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus had been raised in this town. He must have known many of the townspeople. Although he was born in Bethlehem he spent his life in Nazareth until his public ministry began. Joseph and Mary had settled there after the death of Herod while Jesus was still a baby.

When he returned to Nazareth as the anointed Messiah he went to the synagogue. There were many people there to hear him speak. He began to teach and it says that the people were astonished. They acknowledged that what he taught was true and full of wisdom. They also admit that he had performed miracles. Obviously they could find no fault with Jesus' works or his teaching. But they managed to find things to prejudice people against him. Their unbelief could not accept him for who He really was -- the Heaven-sent Messiah, the God-man who could turn water into wine and who could heal lepers and blind and deaf people. The Savior who could forgive sins and cast out demons. Instead they take offense at him. Why?

First of all, because they knew he was home-educated. He had not been to any of the recognized rabbinical schools. He had not attended a university or graduated from a seminary. The congregation listening to him was astonished, saying, **"Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Mark 6:2**

You would think that his lack of formal or higher education would only be a confirmation that his wisdom came from above, that he did not need human instruction. But such was their prejudice against a man who had been raised in their own mean little town, of which Nathaniel said, "Can any thing good come out of Nazareth?" that they charged him in their minds with being a person such as themselves. They wanted to consider him a sinner like themselves even though he had proved to them that he was quite different.

Perhaps the reason Jewish people still have such a hard time believing in Jesus is because they think to themselves, if he is a Jew like me he could not be any better than any other Jew I know.

The unbelief of man resents accepting the fact that God became a human being just like you and me, except for sin. Perhaps that's why the Roman church has trouble with this scripture that says Mary had other children besides Jesus, that Jesus had brothers and sisters. They want to elevate Mary to an immaculate conception and keep her forever as the blessed virgin. But the people of Nazareth latched onto the fact that she was the mother of at least seven sons and daughters, and they knew the brothers and sisters of Jesus, and they were quite ordinary folks just like themselves. And so they said of Jesus, **"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. Mark 6:3**

How could a lowly carpenter, a man with no money, no estate, no status, no prominence in the community, who has never been away from home to attend school, who is just one of us, be the God-man? Just who is he pretending to be? He is taking to himself airs and a place that he does not deserve. And they were offended at him. **Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." Mark 6:4**

He had come to do them good, to be a Savior to them, to heal their sick and demonstrate his love toward them. Of all the towns of Israel Nazareth should have been the happiest and most blessed of all, for God had visited there and been raised there. But because of their unbelief they lost any honor or blessing that might have come to them. They go down in history as a mean and contemptible town. The only good thing that ever came out of Nazareth

was Jesus and the family of Mary and Joseph. You don't hear of any other person who ever lived there that is singled out for honorable mention in the Word of God. The scripture says, **And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. Mark 6:5**

Faith pleases God. The essence of faith is simply believing what God has testified of His Son. John wrote **⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.** John 5:9-12

The Nazarenes had difficulty in believing in Jesus

as the Christ. Yet a little reflection will tell you that they had all they needed to believe in Him. He spoke the truth and wisdom of God and had performed miracles to attest to his divine origin, but they refused to believe because they thought up things to find fault with him, things that had no bearing on his wisdom and works. Had they taken the time they could have set their minds at peace about those things by simply accepting him and studying the scriptures. They could have learned that he was virgin born, not at Nazareth but as the scriptures predicted, at Bethlehem. And as Jesus said, if they did not believe him they should believe the works that the Father was doing by him.

Jesus wondered at their unbelief. The King James says he marveled. It was so unreasonable to not believe and such a benefit to believe. Why would anyone not believe, seeing that through faith in Jesus Christ we may have peace with God and inherit eternal life? By him is preached the forgiveness of sins.

The plan of God rings true. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the best-attested facts of history. Yet men will not believe that they might be saved. Why? Why? Why? Why would a man want to die in his sins? Why would a man turn away from the only Person who can promise everlasting life and who promises to be a Shepherd to him in this life? What good did it ever do the citizens of Nazareth to remain in unbelief when Jesus came to them with proof of his divinity? Was life made better or sweeter? What benefit did they gain by unbelief? Think of the blessedness they forfeited by their unbelief. Think of the misery they perpetuated upon themselves and their children.

May I suggest today that you simply take Jesus at his word? That you believe in him as your one and only Savior.

One time in the temple as he was teaching **¹⁵The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" ¹⁶So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. John 7:15-17**

To come to faith in Jesus is simply to take him at

His Word and believe what He says. If any man will do that he will know that He is truly Savior and Lord.

Faith must believe God's testimony about His Son. Faith comes to Jesus and trusts Him for the remission of sins and peace with God. Faith acts upon the offer of the gospel. The gospel motivates you to action.

How do you stand this morning? Are you in belief or unbelief? Do you believe on Jesus Christ in a personal and saving way, or are you still withholding judgment, still persisting in unbelief? Come to Him today and be saved.

Closing Hymn "Jesus Calls Us"

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Please be gracious to forgive typos and errors of expression. These notes are faithful approximations of what has been preached. May God be glorified in the preaching of His Word.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA
519 MAIN STREET
VILLA RICA, GA. 30180
770-459-5276**

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