

“Proof” Passages: Maybe, Maybe Not: Jesus in Nazareth, Matt 13:57–58; John the Baptist, Mal 3:1 cf. John 1:15, 23, 30–31, 33–34; Philip & Nathanael, John 1:44–48

Apparently Jesus’ siblings were all residents of Nazareth and well-known to those at the synagogue, but they are astonished at His wisdom and powers. Because the Lord was a Nazarene, its citizens had no respect for Him and were shocked at His intelligence wondering, “Where, then, did this man get all these things?”

The answer is, from intense study of the Old Testament scrolls and possibly their Greek translation in the Septuagint.

The Lord discerned that the people of the city had no respect for Him because He was a carpenter’s son:

Matthew 13:57 - And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”

Jesus had returned to His boyhood home, but those He found there are said to take “offense at Him.” That’s mild for what they really thought. The word in the Greek text is **σκανδαλίζω (skandalizō)**: “to scandalize; to reject; to take offense at His words and conduct.”

It is apparent they did not know Jesus very well. Had He lived among them for the past 17 years they would have not been so surprised at His wisdom and power. Their negative volition convinced the Lord that He need not prolong His visit back home. Therefore, He cut short His efforts:

Matthew 13:58 - And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Another example that implies Jesus’ absence from those who should have recognized him is found in John 1. John the Baptist makes bold statements affirming that He is the witness prophesied in:

Malachi 3:1 - “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of the armies.

The implication is that John is this messenger and the long-awaited Messiah is about to arrive on the scene of history.

John makes the declaration that the One he announces is the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy:

John 1:15 - John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, “He who comes after me [His appearance as true humanity] has a higher rank than I, for He existed before Me [recognizes His undiminished deity].”

John recognizes that the Messiah must appear in hypostatic union. He announces Him as true humanity but recognizes Him as undiminished deity.

When the Pharisees in Jerusalem heard of John’s speeches over at the Jordan River, they sent out some priests and Levites on a Fact-Finding Mission. The first question they posed was, “Who are you?” (v. 20). John assured them he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or one of the prophets (v. 21).

Needing an answer in order to report back to the spiritual hierarchy in Jerusalem, the investigators insisted John give them information about himself:

John 1:23 - He said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said [**Isaiah 40:2**]."

The next day, John writes that the Baptist saw Jesus coming and at that time proclaimed Him the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (v. 29)

After this the Baptist recounts the details of how he identified Jesus as the Christ:

John 1:30 - "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

v. 31 - "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

There are two ways to look at the phrase, "I did not recognize Him": (1) John did not know the adult Jesus and therefore did not recognize Him, or (2) John knew Jesus but did not recognize Him as Messiah. Capt chooses the former but commentators prefer the latter.

The word "recognize" is the translation of the pluperfect active indicative of the verb **οἶδα (oída)** and refers to a past event but with the negative conjunction **οὐκ (ouk)** means, "I never knew Him."

The implication is that John had no idea who the Messiah would be. The way God instructed him to find out was to start immersing people into the Jordan River. When the Messiah happened to be the One immersed, John would know it because certain miraculous events would occur:

John 1:33 - "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

v. 34 - "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The Baptist may have recognized Jesus when he appeared at the Jordan River. He certainly knew Him since they were second cousins – John's mother, Elizabeth, being a cousin of Mary's. It is unlikely that the Baptist did not recognize Jesus unless the last time they were together was when the Lord was a youth.

I think this latter possibility is pushing the meaning of the passage, but Capt believes otherwise and it is possible that since the Lord was sequestered out of public view for as much as ten years, John may not have recognized Him.

Another passage that suggests that Jesus did not live in Nazareth or Galilee over a considerable period of time is found in:

John 1:44 - Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

v. 45 - Philip found Nathanael \na-thăn'-ā-e\ and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

v. 46 - Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

v. 47 - Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

v. 48 - Nathanael said to Him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

We know from John 21:2c that Nathanael was from "Cana of Galilee," a community only about five miles from Nazareth. If Jesus had lived that closely to Nathanael for 17 years it is odd they would not have become acquainted.

From these passages, Capt makes the assumption that Jesus could conceivably have lived outside of Palestine for a considerable period prior to His return to inaugurate His public ministry and that during that time He acquired His advanced knowledge of Scripture.

Capt draws on a number of sources to suggest that the Lord spent a majority of the time in the small community of Glastonbury in Somerset County in the southwestern part of England.