



They Met Jesus... At Home

Mark 6:3

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to grow up with Jesus? Matthew and Mark report that Jesus was part of a large family. He had younger brothers named James, Joseph, Judas (Jude), and Simon, as well as some unnamed sisters. Amazingly, none of Jesus' brothers were believers during his earthly ministry. In fact, the Gospel of John tells us that they mocked Jesus' claims to be Messiah.

Think about it – Jesus' siblings saw him in the closest of circumstances. They saw a brother who never showed sinful anger. They saw a playmate who was completely unselfish and who consistently treated others with love and kindness. They saw a boy who never willfully disobeyed his parents.

Yes, Jesus was “all boy.” He was so excited that he forgot to rejoin his parents after visiting the Temple. I'm sure he occasionally smashed his thumb in the carpenter's shop. I do not believe he scored 100% on every exam at Torah School. Luke 2:52 says that he grew in wisdom. Jesus was fully human; he matured as a normal child. But there was never any rebellion or disrespect. Jesus' brothers saw someone who modeled godly character. But they did not believe in Him.

Later, the brothers heard his teaching and saw his miracles. Jesus gave his brothers ample reason to believe, but he didn't force their belief.

Thinking about Jesus' brothers, I am struck by two things:

1) Man's stubborn unbelief. Many people say, "If I had enough evidence, I would believe." But Jesus' brothers show that even the evidence of living with Jesus at home and seeing his miracles did not bring them to faith. We are good at ignoring evidence that we don't want to accept.

2) God's persistent grace. In spite of their skepticism, Jesus didn't give up on his unbelieving brothers. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor 15:7). Jude and James became believers, and James became a leader of the Jerusalem church.

Both James and Jude wrote New Testament epistles, but neither identified himself as a "brother of Jesus." Instead, James calls himself a "servant of God and the Lord Jesus." Jude identifies himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." James and Jude were servants of Jesus. Like every other believer, they had to kneel at the cross.

The brothers of Jesus show that we can refuse to believe, even in the face of overwhelming evidence. But the brothers also show the beautiful love of a Savior who never gave up on his earthly family. Despite their unbelief, he continued to pursue them with the good news of the gospel. What amazing love!