

# Jesus Traveled Throughout Galilee, Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom

**Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44**

**DIG:** Why did Jesus find it necessary to go off to a solitary place at that time? What pressures was He facing? What might He pray about? How might this relate to His decision in Mark 1:38? What are His priorities?

**REFLECT:** What worthy activities or pursuits often lure you away from your main priorities? Messiah is obviously busy and in high demand, yet He made a deliberate effort to spend time alone with the Father. Is your schedule demanding? How do you talk to God or hear from Him in the midst of the many distractions in your life? How long has it been since you let God have you? I mean *really* have you? How long since you gave Him a portion of undiluted, uninterrupted time listening to His voice? Apparently Yeshua did. If prayer was that necessary for Jesus, how much more must it be necessary for us?

The previous day had been demanding. Messiah had taught in the synagogue and cast out a demon there. Then He went back to Simon's house for the main Sabbath meal, but found Peter's mother-in-law seriously ill and healed her. When Shabbat had ended after the sun had gone down, He continued to minister to the multitudes healing all who came to Him. Nobody was busier than Christ. He was tired and needed to be refreshed.

As a result, very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left Simon Peter's house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42a). Prayer is an attitude of complete dependence on ADONAI. From this incident we learn that even though Yeshua Messiah had authority in Himself to heal the sick and cast out demons, He did not act independently of the Father. Prayer was absolutely vital in His life and ministry. He needed time alone; He needed silence.

There are only six occasions in the Gospels in which Jesus withdraws to pray by Himself, and each incident involves the temptation *not* to carry out God's mission for Him - a mission that would ultimately bring suffering, rejection, and death. These crises seem to increase in intensity and reach their climax in the agony of Gethsemane.<sup>407</sup>

The first time He went away by Himself to pray was when our Savior was driven into the wilderness and tempted by the devil. There the Holy Spirit was present with Him as He faced the ancient Serpent (see Bj - **Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness**).

Second, **Jesus withdrew to pray** prior to His second major preaching tour (see **Cm - Jesus Traveled Throughout Galilee, Proclaiming the Good News**). He knew that the Adversary would be actively opposing His mission and **prayer** would be needed.

Third, **the Lord prayed alone** after His first messianic miracle (see **Cn - The Healing of a Jewish Leper**). He knew that He would get the attention of the Sanhedrin because it was their responsibility to investigate any claim of messiahship. And so He did - as members of the Sanhedrin traveled all the way to Capernaum to hear Him preach. **Jesus** knew it was going to be a turning point in His earthly ministry because He not only healed a paralytic that day, but more importantly, He forgave His sins - claiming to be deity.

Fourth, **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** went to a quiet place to pray before choosing His talmidim who would carry on His ministry after He was gone (see **Cy - These are the Names of the Twelve Apostles**). These were important decisions and He needed to be by Himself and pray about it.

Fifth, after feeding the five thousand, the people wanted to make Him king. Thus, **the Rabbi from Galilee** sent His talmidim back across the Lake to the Gennesaret, and dismissed the crowd before going up on a mountainside by Himself to pray (see **Fo - Jesus Rejects the Idea of a Political Messiah**). He delayed going to His apostles long enough to save them from another storm. By walking on the water, He displayed His deity.

And sixth, in the climax of the **Suffering Servant** praying alone, He was under so much stress that His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground foreshadowing the cross in the morning (see **Kx - The Garden of Gethsemane**).

But whether it's for **Jesus**, or for us, silence is hard to find isn't it? Cities are notoriously noisy due to the high concentration of traffic and people. Sometimes there seems to be no escape from loud music, loud voices, or loud machines. But the kind of noise that endangers our spiritual wellbeing is not the noise we can't escape but the noise we invite into our lives. Some of us use noise as a way of shutting out loneliness; voices of TV and radio personalities give us the illusion of companionship. Some of us use noise as a way of shutting out the voice of **God**: constant chatter, even when we're talking about **God**, keeps us from hearing what He has to say.<sup>408</sup>

**Simon and [the other apostles] went to look for Him, and when they found Him, they exclaimed: Everyone is looking for you (Mark 1:36-37)!** The people of the Capernaum tried to keep the miracle-working Rabbi from leaving them because they wanted more and more of His miracles. They came like a flood. There was no way **Jesus** could not shut the door (**Luke 4:42**). It is human nature to try to put up the barriers and to have time and peace to oneself; that is what **Messiah** never did. Conscious as He was of His weariness and exhaustion, He was still more conscious of the relentless cry of human need. So when they

came looking for Him, He rose from His knees to meet the challenge of the ministry given to Him by the Father. Prayer will never do our work for us; but it will strengthen us for the tasks that must be done.<sup>409</sup>

But the real reason of the flight was His desire to preach in as many **synagogues** as possible before the Scribes and Pharisees could try to obstruct Him. Jesus had a plan of a preaching tour in Galilee, and He felt, I am sure, that it could not begin soon enough.<sup>410</sup> His response must have surprised them for the crowds were large and enthusiastic. However Jesus said to His talmidim: **Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach the Good News of the Kingdom there also. That is why I have come (Mk 1:38; Lk 4:43).** He left that very night, not wanting any opposition from the people of Capernaum.

He resisted the undertow of the people by anchoring to the rock of His purpose: employing the uniqueness to make a big deal out of God everywhere He could. And aren't we glad He did? Suppose He had heeded the crowd and set up camp in Capernaum, reasoning, "I thought the whole world was My target and the cross My destiny. But the whole town is telling Me to stay in Capernaum. Could all those people be wrong?" Well . . . Yes they could! In defiance of the crowd, Yeshua said no to the good things so He could say yes to the right thing: His unique call.<sup>411</sup>

**This was Christ's second major preaching tour.** So Jesus traveled through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:39a; Luke 4:44). **The main object of the synagogues was the teaching of the people. It served as public school for boys, where they studied the Talmud and learned to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. For men, the synagogue was a place of advanced theological study. The Shabbat service itself mainly consisted of a reading from the Torah, with a subsequent reading from the prophets, and a teaching, were conjoined.**<sup>412</sup>

Little wonder that word of His teaching and His deeds spread swiftly and large crowds followed Jesus throughout the region. News about Him spread all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and He healed them (Mattityahu 4:24; Mark 1:39b). The demon-possessed (Greek: *daimonizomenoi*) is sometimes translated *demoniacs*. The Bible takes for granted the existence of a spirit-world. According to the B'rit Chadashah, demons - also called **unclean or evil spirits, lying spirits, fallen angels, or angels of the devil** - can affect people by causing physical illness, mental aberrations, emotional malaise and moral temptation.<sup>413</sup> They cannot, however, ease drop on our prayers to the Lord, nor read our minds. Their only guide to stumbling us is to observe our actions. This is depicted all too well in C. S. Lewis' classic book on the activity of demons called *the Screwtape Letters*.

Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis (ten Greek cities), Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed Him (Matthew 4:25). He had a **three-fold ministry**. **The place** was at the **synagogues**. **The content** was **the Good News of the Kingdom**. Once again **Matthew** presents **Jesus** as the King. At that time **Yeshua** was not preaching **the Gospel** because **He** hadn't died yet. **The authentication** of **His** messiahship was the **healing** of **every disease** and the casting out of **demons**. Thus, we see **the Lord** widening influence as a result of **His** words and **His** work.

This is the beginning of **the Gospel**, for by **Christ's** preaching and teaching **He** was preparing **the people** for that which is salvation; that is, **His** death and **His** resurrection.