

God's Chosen Servant

Matthew 12:15-21 and Mark 3:7-12

DIG: In reacting to the Pharisee's threats to kill Him, how did the Lord fulfill prophecy? What did that say about Yeshua's identity? How far were people traveling to see and hear Messiah? Why were the people coming? Did this matter to Yeshua? Why or why not? How many did He heal? Who recognized His true identity?

REFLECT: How does Jesus' example or courage and conviction in the face of danger inspire you? In telling other people about Christ, what use of the TaNaKh do you make? What is one way the Lord has healed your life? What motivates you to come to Yeshua for help? How far do you have to travel to be with the Suffering Servant?

The Bible attributes many titles to **Messiah**, and none is more fitting than **My Servant**, a title first used by **Isaiah** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Hp - Here Is My Servant, Whom I Uphold**). Just as the prophet predicted the coming of the **Meshiach**, **Yeshua** came in wonder and majesty as the **divine Servant**, serving the **Father** and mankind.

This brief passage is an island of refreshing beauty in an ocean of confrontation, which records the first major rejection of **Christ**, led by the **Pharisees** and the **Torah-teachers**. The main point of contention was the Oral Law (see **Ei - The Oral Law**). After the renegade **Rabbi** exposed their unscriptural beliefs about the **Sabbath**, the **Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus (Mark 3:6)**. In the midst of that mounting antagonism, however, we learn some outstanding characteristics of our **Savior** whom the world hates but **ADONAI** dearly loves.

Aware that the **Pharisees plotted to kill Him**, **Jesus** immediately **withdrew from that place** on the Sabbath. **He** had not come to do **His** own will but the will of **His Father (John 5:30 and 6:38)**, and it was not **the Father's** time for **the Son's** ministry and life to end. Until then **Yeshua** would be in a continuous cycle of preaching and healing, of acceptance by some but rejection by most (especially **the Pharisees**) and then withdrawing to another place. As **His** ministry progressed, like birth pangs, the cycles became shorter and shorter because the opposition came more quickly and more intensely.

He had to leave the synagogues. It was not that **He** withdrew through fear; it was not the retreat of a **Man** who feared to face the consequences. When the time came, **Jesus** accepted **His** arrest, trial, and crucifixion without complaint or resistance - although at any time **He** could easily have saved **Himself** and destroyed **those** who sought to destroy **Him**.

But that would be years later. There was much **He** had to do and say before the time of the final conflict. So **He** left the synagogues and went out to **the lake** and the open sky.

The Lord and His talmidim withdrew to the Sea of Galilee and a large crowd followed Him. There was a rising, stirring interest in **Yeshua's** messianic claims. **His** reputation was spreading, not only within Jewish territory, but also among the *Gentiles*. **When they heard about all He was doing, many people came to Him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 12:15a; Mark 3:7-8).** Many made the hundred-mile journey from **Yerushalayim** to **Judea** to listen to **Him** and to be healed by **Him**. The word **large**, *polu*, is in the emphatic position, and calls attention to the fact that it was an *exceptionally large crowd*.

The people Jesus healed were despised and neglected by **the Pharisees** and **the Torah-teachers**, as well as the Sadducees (the priesthood), which **ADONAI** had established as a means for bringing **His people** nearer to **Himself**. **The religious leaders** were only interested in the rich and influential, not the sick, the poor, or the outcast. As in the case of the man with the shriveled hand (see *Cw* - [Jesus Heals a Man with a Shriveled Hand](#)), **their** only interest in his affliction was to use it as a means of inducing **Messiah** to break the Sabbath in order to accuse and convict **Him**. **Jesus**, on the other hand, always had time for those who were suffering and in need.

The Lord healed many people who didn't even **believe** in **Him** for salvation, merely desperate for **healing**. Of the ten lepers **He** cleansed on one occasion, only one, a **Samaritan**, showed evidence of **faith** by returning to give thanks. **Messiah's** words: **Rise and go, your faith has made you well (Luke 17:19)**, refer to the man's spiritual **healing** through salvation, not to his physical **healing** from leprosy, which had already taken place. All ten lepers were physically **healed**, but only one was **healed** spiritually.

Christ feels the pain that hurts us and the weight of **burdens** that grind us down; and in **His** grace **He** heals our hurts and lifts our **burdens**. **He** said: **Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I AM gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden light (Mattityahu 11:28-30).** **The Pharisees**, Sadducees and **Torah-teachers**, who were the false shepherds of Israel (**Jeremiah 23**), had only imposed heavy **burdens**, but when **the true Shepherd** came to Isra'el, **He** lifted them. That is why **Peter** tells us to **cast our burdens** and anxieties on the **Chief Shepherd**, because **He** cares for you (**First Peter 5:4 and 7**).⁴⁷⁵

Because of the crowd He told **His** apostles to have a small fishing boat, essentially a rowboat, ready for **Him**, to keep the people from crowding because those with diseases

were pushing forward to crush Him (Mark 3:9-10). The verb to crush is *epipto*, means to fall upon. Those around Him fell against Him in the desperation to be healed; they seemed to have little interest in Jesus other than a miracle-worker. The scene must have been chaotic. Jesus stayed with the unruly crowd because they needed Him, but He found it necessary to protect Himself. Therefore, He needed a little rowboat ready, and close to the shore, so as to be able to take Him off at a moments notice. The verb shows continuous action. The rowboat was able to keep moving down the shoreline.

Jesus healed all who were ill. In anticipation of His coming rejection by the Sanhedrin, He warned them not to tell others about Him (Mattityahu 12:15b-16). It is not that the Servant will be completely quiet, yet it was clear that the point was coming quickly where He would stop trying to convince the nation of Israel in general, and the Great Sanhedrin in particular, that He was indeed the Meshiach (see En - [Four Drastic Changes in Christ's Ministry](#)).

Matthew noted that this ministry to those multitudes who had come from outside the land of Israel was a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4. The Gentile nations would turn to Him and put their faith in the blessed hope. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah (see my commentary on [Isaiah Hp - Here Is My Servant, Whom I Uphold](#)). Isaiah declared: Here is My Servant whom I have chosen, the One I love, in whom I delight. The Greek word *pais* is not the usual word for servant and is often translated *son*. In secular Greek it was used of an especially intimate servant who was trusted and loved like a son. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the TaNaKh, *pais* is used of Abraham's chief servant (Genesis 24:2), of Pharaoh's royal servants (Genesis 41: 10 and 38), and of the angels as ADONAI's supernatural servants (Job 4:18). I will put My Spirit on Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, till He has brought justice through to victory. In His name the nations will put their hope (Mattityahu 12:17-21).

Those who saw Jesus - really saw Him - knew there was something different. At His touch blind beggars received their sight. At His command crippled legs became strong and walked. At His embrace empty lives were filled with vision.

He fed thousands with one basket. He stilled a storm with one command. He raised the dead with one proclamation. He changed lives with one request. He altered the history of the world with one life, lived in one country, was born in one manger, and died on one hill . . .

God did what we wouldn't dare dream. He did what we couldn't imagine. He became a man so we could trust Him. He became a sacrifice so we could know Him. And He defied death

so we could follow **Him**.

It defies logic. It is a divine insanity. A holy incredibility.

Only a **Creator** beyond the fence of logic could offer such a gift of love.⁴⁷⁶

While some rabbinic commentators attempt to connect this and other **Suffering Servant** passages to the nation of Isra'el as a whole (see my commentary on **Isaiah Iy - The Death of the Suffering Servant**), many other sources disagree by acknowledging that this passage solely applies to the coming **Messiah (Targum Yonaton, Rabbi David Kimchi)**. This rings true, as a close study of the **Suffering Servant** passages confirm that there are many results only the **Meshiach** (not national Isra'el) can accomplish (for example, the atonement of sins and faith on the part of the Gentile nations). As an eyewitness to those events in the life of **Yeshua, Mattityahu** uses the **Isaiah** proof-text to show that the ministry of **Jesus** will soon go through the predicted shift in emphasis from national, to individual salvation.⁴⁷⁷

Some of the **people** brought friends or relatives who were **demon** possessed in the hope that **Jesus** could deliver them. **Whenever the impure spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him**. The verb is in the imperfect tense, pointing to continuous action. **The demons** repeatedly threw **themselves** down before **Him**. **And they cried out, "You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11)**. Once again the verb is imperfect. **They** kept on crying out. All of the deep, throaty, unruly voices from the satanic world must have sounded horrific. The fact that **they** testified that **Yeshua** is the **Son of God** indicates their knowledge and acceptance of the Trinity.

But He gave them strict orders not to tell others about Him (Mark 3:12). **He** would not accept testimony from **demons**. It is truly ironic that **the demons** recognized **Jesus** as the **Son of God** even though **the large crowd** and **the Jewish religious leaders** did not.

A good mystery novel provides intriguing details that twist and intertwine until the reader is almost in knots. That's the point at which a good storyteller pauses; rather than adding more details, the detective in the story sits down to mull over the evidence. This gives the readers a chance to collect their thoughts - to assimilate what is known and to prepare for new details to come.

Mark, the master storyteller, has paused at this point to give us time for reflection. In previous chapters, we've seen **Jesus** healing people afflicted with one sickness after another. **Messiah** went out and recruited **His** first apostles, but soon, crowds of people were coming to **Him**. There was that intriguing little secret that slipped out when **Yeshua** exorcised **demons**. **They** knew who **He** was, but **the Son of God** would not let them speak (**Mark 1:23-26**). **Mark** had captured the attention of his readers.

Interest was not enough in itself; however, for **Mark** also had a message to get across. He established a couple of general points about **the Meshiach** before proceeding with any more details or stories.

First, Jesus had an overwhelming appeal. If you mark on a map the cities and regions from which **people** were coming (**Mark 3:8**), you would see that **crowds** were streaming in from all directions to listen to **the Rabbi from Galilee**. He wasn't merely some local rabbi with a small following of talmidim. He attracted great numbers of people from every region and from every walk of life.

Second, Everyone had to decide for themselves - Who is this man? What is so special about **Him** that **the demons** are not permitted to announce **His** identity? **Mark** would continue to give us clues, but the question he wanted his audience to ponder at this point, and throughout his *Gospel*, was, "Who is **Jesus**?"

Let us take time today for the reflection that **Mark** intended. If you're not completely convinced of the greatness and divinity of **Jesus of Nazareth**, take time today to pray about the evidence in **the Life of Christ**. Those who are committed believers, take some time to allow **the Ruach HaKodesh** to speak to you more deeply. No matter how close you've grown to **Yeshua**, **His** presence always calls for change and renewal. Like leaky vessels, we constantly need to be refilled with **the living water of the Spirit**.⁴⁷⁸

Lord Yeshua, I open my heart for You to speak to me. Whether You're calling for change in my personal life, or calling me to service in my family, church, messianic synagogue, community or nation, I want to follow wherever You go. Amen.