

THE INCLUSIVE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

(Matt. 12:16-18)

Because of opposition from the religious leaders in Matthew 12, Jesus removed Himself from the area of Capernaum. As He did so, great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them ALL! But Jesus warned them as follows:

Matthew 12:16 (NKJV)

16 Yet He warned them not to make Him known,

There is a CONTEXT to this statement consistent with prophetic Messianic prophecy. The CONTEXT was rising hostility on the part of the religious leaders, and so Jesus tells His followers not to make Him known with the goal of preventing a further escalation of conflict with the Pharisees.

If these crowds continued to fan the flames of Messianic fever surrounding Jesus, it would only seek to exacerbate the tensions with the religious leaders. Thus, Jesus sought to de-escalate the tensions.

Jesus, while NEVER compromising the TRUTH about Himself, did not come looking for trouble or conflict. He came with a very gracious ministry. And in fact, when things became very intense – He backed off from it time and time again (cf. Mt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9).

At His first coming, Jesus did not come with a takeover movement but rather presented a movement of APPEAL. This aspect of the Messiah was not clearly understood.

John 3:17 (NKJV)

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Matthew 12:17 (NKJV)

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

This behavior of withdrawing was not what the average Jew expected out of the Messiah, yet as shown, it was in perfect harmony with Messianic prophecy seen in Isaiah.

The Jews expected that when the Messiah came, He would come blowing the opposition away. They expected Him to come as a conquering KING, forcefully having His way with His enemies.

So when Christ came in a very gracious and non-provocative manner – wanting to avoid trouble- that didn't make sense with how they envisioned the Messiah would come.

The Jews did see certain Messianic texts in the OT that spoke of a humble suffering Messiah, but they also saw Messianic texts emphasizing a strong ruling Messiah. And which one do you suppose got most of the attention: The suffering Messiah or the reigning Messiah? The reigning Messiah, of course.

So this withdrawing demeanor that says, "Don't make Me known," was hard for them to understand. It didn't fit their profile of the coming Messiah. After all, they were looking for political deliverance from Rome, and this would require VICTORIOUS Messianic leadership.

Yes, they understood that in bringing in the kingdom the Messiah would heal, but they also expected Him to forcefully set up His kingdom. Jesus just didn't seem to fit the strong/victorious idea of the coming Messiah.

What the Jews failed to see, and fail yet to this day to see, is that there are NOT two Messiahs, but two separate comings of the ONE true Messiah – Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Once you understand that the prophetic Scriptures align perfectly.

The non-provocative ministry of Christ is then shown to be completely consistent with Messianic prophecy as seen in Isaiah 42:1-4, which is loosely quoted in Matt. 12:18-21.

There are 4 KEY Messianic SERVANT PASSAGES in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).

Matthew 12:18 (NKJV)

18 "**Behold! My Servant** whom I have **chosen**, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

Note that Matthew 12:18 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1

Isaiah 42:1 (NKJV)

1 "**Behold! My Servant** whom I uphold, My **Elect** One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Early Jewish Scribes before the time of Christ would consistently reference the Isaiah Servant passages as referring to the Messiah. However, after the Jews rejected Christ, they then came to the position that all the servant passages must refer to Israel.

It is somewhat confusing because both Israel and the Messiah are in various places called God's servant (cf. Isa. 41:8; 42:19).

"The connection between the Servant (the nation of Israel) and the Servant (the Person, the Messiah) has frequently been compared to a pyramid, with the base being the whole nation; the middle section being Israel not merely after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and the summit being the person of the Messiah arising out of Israel." - **Merrill Unger**

Clearly there is a close link in the Servant motif regarding Israel and the Messiah, and yet there are also clear distinctions.

The NT consistently applies the Messianic Servant passages to Jesus (cf. Mt. 12:17-21; Lk. 2:32; 4:16-18; Acts 8:30-35; also cf. Mt. 20:25-28; 23:11; Mk. 9:35, 10:43-45; Acts 3:13, 26; Acts 4:27, 30).

Yes, Israel is God's servant too, but the Servant in view here is clearly unique and clearly Messianic. And as is common in Isaiah, the text of Isaiah 42:1-4 intermingles aspects of Messiah's first coming with that of His second coming. Verse 1 characterizes His calling and the outcome of His mission.

When God says, "*Whom I have chosen*," that is translated as "***My Elect One***" in Isaiah 42:1. The word *Elect* simply means chosen. The Messiah is God's special chosen One. He has a unique calling that is different from all others. He is uniquely God's Servant, called by God, "*My Servant*". He is uniquely chosen by God the Father to serve as the God-ordained Messiah.

Note the exclamation point after "**Behold!**" This is intensive! God wants to get our attention. This is worthy of high-definition attention because it is all important. This is the main attraction of the whole of Scripture! This is about the most important person in history – the KEY figure in all the Bible – God's chosen Messiah!

He is the Father's "**Beloved**" in Whom His soul is well pleased. He pleases God supremely because He is the perfect Servant. His obedience was 100% all the time. He did nothing but please the Father in His role of humility. As Jesus said in John 8:29, "*I always do those things that please Him.*" There was no exception. He never sinned. The Father's delight in His

Servant was expressly stated at His baptism (cf. Mt. 3:16-17; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22, Jn. 1:32-33); and on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:5).

And He is the One upon Whom God uniquely put His Spirit. The Spirit came upon Jesus at the time of His Baptism in the form of a dove (cf. Mt. 3:16). John 3:34 says that God gave Him the Spirit without measure – meaning He was fully endowed with the Spirit’s power and fully controlled by the Spirit in full measure without exception (cf. Acts 10:38).

Note the **Trinity** is represented here in Matthew 12:18 which is a quote of Isaiah 42:1. And there are “echoes” of the Trinity in at least four places in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 42:1; 48:16; 61:1; 63:7-10).

The KEY point in context is that this ONE – this KIND of Messiah being presented was God-ordained. It was according to prophecy clearly spelled out in the OT. The Messiah would come as God’s Servant. He would come – NOT forcefully – but rather with gentleness and graciousness – with a message of APPEAL – not blowing people away.

Note that here, in this introductory statement of the “Servant Songs” from Isaiah as quoted here by Matthew, the Messiah Servant would “**declare justice to the Gentiles**.” The sense of justice is righteousness or what is RIGHT. The Messiah comes declaring how people can be RIGHT with God through the Messiah and how that in His kingdom Messiah will make all things RIGHT. This is the ultimate message of the prophets; it has application for all people, and is certain to be fulfilled.

The sense here is that the Messiah does not come with a political agenda but rather comes with a message of RIGHTNESS that even has application for the Gentiles.

“His ministry would reach beyond the confines of Israel; He would **declare justice to the Gentiles**. This latter note becomes more dominant as Israel’s “NO” grows louder.” – **William MacDonald**

Yes, the Messiah comes to ultimately straighten out the Gentiles (as the Jews expected), but not initially as they expected.