

Text: Matthew 12:15-21

Title: A Bruised Reed

Truth: Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy about Himself.

Date/Location: November 14, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

Jesus is the Servant of Old Testament prophecy.

I. Conflict Avoidance...For Now, 12:15

- A. Jesus knew the Pharisees hated him. It appears from a human perspective that He learned about their plot against Him. Perhaps the grapevine got the news back to Him. Because it was not yet the time for Him to be offered up (see John 7:6), he began what I call an “avoidance strategy.” That is, He avoided unnecessary contact with the murderous leaders and carried on His ministry of preaching in the towns and villages and healing those who were sick (Matt. 4:23, 9:35).
- B. This strategy allowed him to minister to great crowds of people instead of being hamstrung or sidelined by the death threats. He healed many people.
- C. To continue flying under the radar—sort of—He told them not to make known who healed them or where this miracle worker was. Also, He was not intending to raise up an insurrection (John 6:15).
- D. This approach matches what the Scripture recorded centuries about the character and ministry of the Servant Messiah, so Matthew says that Jesus avoided the murderous leaders and warned His crowds not to make Him known. But what did the prophet say about the Servant?

II. Isaiah 42:1-4

- A. The quotation is from Isaiah 42:1-4. Why is this repeated in Scripture here? What does it mean? First, examine the text itself:

Isaiah 42:1-4	Matthew 12:18-21
"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in	"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved

<p>whom My soul delights!</p> <p>I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.</p> <p>2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.</p> <p>3 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.</p> <p>4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law."</p>	<p>in whom My soul is well pleased!</p> <p>I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.</p> <p>19 He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.</p> <p>20 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench,</p> <p>till He sends forth justice to victory; [summary of 3b-4a]</p> <p>21 And in His name Gentiles will trust."</p>
---	---

B. The slight differences between the original and the quotation are typical of OT quotations in the NT, many of which use the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew language Old Testament. That was the Bible used by many people at the time of the writing of the New Testament. Also, the dual authors (Matthew, and the Spirit Who inspired his text) did not intend necessarily to use the entire quoted text. The parts they used/summarized were sufficient for the purpose to call forth to the reader/hearer's memory the promise, and they could see the clear connection between the text. We can be certain that the text as found in Matthew is accurately following the meaning of the original text and itself is inspired by God and completely accurate. What Matthew's gospel says is truth.

C. A few notes about the quotation itself:

1. This is a Messianic prophecy. The Servant is the Messiah.

2. There is a doctrine of election surrounding the Messiah. He is the anointed/chosen one.
3. God is well pleased in this Servant. See Matt. 3:17, 17:5.
4. The Spirit of God is upon this Servant. See John 3:34, Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38.
5. Twice, the Gentiles are mentioned in this prophecy. It was clear that the Messiah had a focus on His people the Jews, but He was also going to serve the Gentiles as well. His great service was too little to limit to the Jewish people only.

Yet the Jewish leaders left no space in their minds for the Gentiles. Gentiles were, in their minds, dogs. They were pagans. The Jews misunderstood one of the Lord's sayings that had to do with Gentiles (John 7:34-35). When Jesus spoke of Gentiles in the Old Testament receiving favor from God, His audience could not stand it (Luke 4:24-29). When Paul said he was going to the Gentiles, the Jews hated him (Acts 13:46-50, 22:21-22). But God has a heart for the Gentiles to be saved,¹ and Jesus did too. He died for them (John 3:16—when you read *world* think *nations*) as well as for His Jewish people (Matt. 1:21). The nations will trust in His name. It was no mystery that God's Servant would bring Gentiles into a relationship with God. The mystery was not Gentile salvation. The mystery was that there was to be a unified body of Jews and Gentiles called the church.

6. He is not a fighter—thus the mention of not quarreling or crying out in the streets. He is tender and kind—thus the statement about the bruised reed and smoking flax. Such items were useless for whatever purpose—burned up, damaged, etc. But God takes people who are that way, and brings them to Himself.
 7. But He will bring justice to completion on the earth, something that is far from us today.
- D. Many Jewish people were looking for a political Messiah. Getting rid of the Romans and establishing a kingdom that will benefit us in terms of international prominence and physical prosperity is the

¹ Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, Luke 2:30-32, Acts 11:18, 14:27, 18:6.

most important thing, isn't it? This happened because it is all too easy to get mixed up in your mind about what is *truly* important. You get involved with the tyranny of the present and the seemingly urgent instead of the controlling factor of God's Word. That was true then. And it is true today. We have gotten ourselves all mixed up with politics, especially with the currently hot COVID topic, instead of the controlling element of the Bible. What does the Bible tell us? What does God want us to do? Somehow it is easy to lose sight of this and throw Scripture out the window and say, "The Bible does not apply in this situation because it doesn't talk about viruses and science and vaccines, etc." But, my friends, Scripture does speak to this situation, just like it has for thousands of years to every situation in which believers find themselves.

E. But Jesus was not that political kind of "Messiah." He was a servant, he was not involved in quarreling with anyone, He was not making huge political announcements like a man would who was trying to take over the political scene. He was gentle and lowly, not doing damage to even those who were in a tender condition like a smoking flax or bruised reed. He was interested in justice and calling the Gentiles to trust in Him. Had the Jewish people been in tune with the Messianic prophecies, they would not have been looking only for one to be king; they would have been looking for one to be Savior, one who would be concerned for all people (sheep of this fold, and sheep of another fold), one who would not strive within the political system of whoever was governing at the time, and certainly they would be expecting one to call them to covenant faithfulness.

Conclusion

Jesus departed from where the death threats were, continued His preaching, healed crowds of people, and warned the audience to keep quiet about His whereabouts and work. I find it interesting that He did this specifically in order to fulfill prophecy in Isaiah (and elsewhere). It was not that He had to try super hard to do that, because in His very nature He *is* the things that the prophets speak about. Yet, He took actions that specifically fulfilled prophecy. Consider another example: John 19:28. He was consumed with

fulfilling the will of God and even did things in His own suffering, and to bring about His own suffering, to accomplish God's will.

1. Application point #1. Are we as willing to do the will of God in our own lives? Are we so willing even if it costs us something?

Where do we find God's will? It is clearly laid out in Scripture. In the situation of our Lord, that which was revealed already was limited to the Old Testament—and whatever He had said up to that point in His life and the few things revealed by the angel to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, for example. But let's say the Old Testament to make it easier. He did what was prophesied about Him. There are not prophecies about us specifically, but there are general teachings in the Old Testament and of course in the New Testament, which direct our conduct. We take the general teaching of Scripture and apply it to our specific situation.

2. Application point #2: do we have a character like Jesus, one that will not quarrel nor cry out, one that tenderly helps the bruised reeds and smoking flax that exist in our circles? Do we long for true Biblical justice to be brought in when the Messiah returns?
3. Application point #3: It occurred to me that the Lord warned the people to whom He ministered not to make Him known. Of all people who *should be* known, Jesus would be at the top of the list. Our work is to make Him known throughout the world. Yet we ourselves can follow His footsteps and minister "under the radar." We are not the focus of ministry. We should humbly go about our work and not toot our own horns, so to speak.

MAP