

Mark 6:1-2

“Yeshua’s Teaching Astonishing People on the Sabbath”

“Yeshua went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?’”

Previously in Mark’s Gospel, Yeshua the Messiah has just raised the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue official (Mark 5:21-43). Continuing in Mark’s record, Yeshua returns to His hometown of Nazareth: “He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him” (Mark 6:1, RSV). It is narrated, “On *Shabbat* he started to teach in the synagogue” (Mark 6:2a, CJB), and so that Yeshua and His Disciples remember the Sabbath is obvious enough to readers.¹

While most commentary on Mark 6:1-2ff will not focus on Yeshua’s Sabbath keeping, and instead more on what took place, there are a number of indications one may encounter. William L. Lane, for example, describes how “On the sabbath day Jesus attended the synagogue and was given the opportunity to expound the reading from the Torah and the Haftarah, the Law and the prophetic portion.”² James R. Edwards also recognizes, “According to his custom, Jesus addresses his teaching ‘in the synagogue, that is, to the heart of the Jewish community.’”³ By attending synagogue services in His hometown of Nazareth on *Shabbat*, by action Yeshua affirmed this as a valuable and worthwhile practice for God’s own. However, the Sabbath is not just a time for teaching, liturgy, and corporate worship. As is witnessed in this scene, the Sabbath is to be a venue where the identity of Yeshua is surely to be contemplated, and Yeshua’s activities are to be facilitated and enacted.

When Yeshua teaches in His home synagogue at Nazareth, it is recorded, “many who heard him were astounded. They said, ‘Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands’” (Mark 6:2b, NRSV). The verb *ekplēssō* (ἐκπλήσσω) means, “**to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed, amaze, astound, overwhelm**” (BDAG).⁴ What follows in Mark’s record (Mark 6:3-6), is an indication that there were various people who had their doubts about Yeshua, and were even offended by Him. The main reason stated by the Lord for this reason is, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household” (Mark 6:3). The local residents of Nazareth had seen Yeshua grow up, and they knew of Him as a carpenter prior to the start of His unique ministry. They did not know Yeshua the Rabbi or Yeshua the Prophet or Yeshua the miracle worker. They probably had not paid that much attention in those instances when Yeshua had spoken or taught in their local synagogue.

¹ The parallel record in Matthew 13:53-58 does not specify that it was the Sabbath.

² Lane, *Mark*, pp 200-201.

³ Edwards, *Mark*, 170.

⁴ BDAG, 308.

Mark 6:1-2 Sabbath and Rest in the Apostolic Scriptures

According to Larry W. Hurtado, there was “an inability to believe that this ‘hometown boy’ is anything special...[an example] of an unwillingness to recognize Jesus as the heaven-sent envoy of salvation.”⁵ Robert A. Guelich goes further and concludes, “the synagogue becomes the place of rejection by both the religious leaders and those who knew him best.”⁶ But, there is a difference between Yeshua being rejected by those attending synagogue services, and Yeshua rejecting the institution of the seventh-day Sabbath, which is not present in this scene. While it is fair to recognize that Yeshua and His Disciples would most frequently be found in the synagogue on *Shabbat*, if they ever returned to areas where they had been rejected, they may not have attended formal synagogue services. Instead, they may have been more likely to have an informal Sabbath gathering among themselves and a few others.

⁵ Hurtado, pp 88-89.

⁶ Guelich, 308.