

# ***“You Better BE... & BE-Ready!”***

Matthew 10:16-23

March 8, 2026

**INTRO:** How true, tough, & tested are your  
faith, family, & faith-family?

*Today is a day of divine preparation thru declaration & introspection!*

## **PRAYER**

### **CONTEXT:**

- Gospel of Matthew on The Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Matthew 1-7... **Jesus is Lord!** *How to live life!*
- Matthew 8-9... *Jesus divinely displaying His deity*
- Matthew 10... AMBASSADOR APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY
  - vv.1-4 - *“Come And See To Go And BE!”*
  - vv.5-10 - *“The Power Of One”*
  - vv.11-15 - *“What Are You Looking For?”*
  - v.16 - *“Before You Go...”*
  - vv.16-23 - *“You Better BE... & BE-Ready!”*

**BIG IDEA:** Fake & faithless, cultural christianity  
is cheap & easy... but real & faithful,  
biblical Christianity is costly & hard.

**PREVIEW:** 1. BEHOLD! 2. BEWARE! 3. BELIEVE!

**T/S:** In the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7), Jesus taught the principles for his followers that are to characterize their lives as “kingdom-life” disciples in our everyday world. This second Discourse develops what it means to be “mission-driven disciples.” Jesus’ disciples are to go out to share and live the message of the gospel of the kingdom of God to an alien and often hostile world. – NIV Application Commentary

The NASB’S passage title: *“A Hard Road before Them”*

I thought of a few myself...

- *“Invincible Vulnerability”*
- *“Vulnerable Invincibility”*
- *“Blessed Christian Rejection”*

The CAMBRIDGE BIBLE: *“The Church of the Future”*

**TEXT:**

## I. BEHOLD (Hear the imperative command!)

***16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore, be as shrewd as serpents & as innocent as doves***

- Note the subtle but global shift here...
  - vv.5-15 = **PRESENT** - to *“lost sheep of Israel”*
  - vv.16-23 = **FUTURE** shift to global & gentiles
    - Grammar tense shifts to future
    - Great Commission is being shared again
    - **What’s told of here doesn’t happen here...**

- **Remember/BEHOLD** *your ordinary ordination...*
  - Ordination = preparation for persecution
  - Living-for & Fighting-against = defines us
    - What you believe is who you become!
    - Your behaviors reveal your true beliefs.
    - Our passions & priorities seek unity.
  - **10 Ordinary Ornaments of Ordination:**
    - **SELECTED**
    - **SET-Apart**
    - **SENT**
    - **SHEEP**
    - **SUBMERGED & SURROUNDED**
    - **SUSEPTIBLE**
    - **STRATEGIC**
    - **SHREWD**
      - **S.** = BE Sent, Stabilizing, Soldier
      - **H.** = Holy, Helpful, & Hope-filled
      - **R.** = Repentant, Resilient, Relational
      - **E.** = Evangelize, Engage, Explain, Equip
      - **W.** = Worship, Work, Warrior-Witness
      - **D.** = Devoted Discipling & Development
    - **SIMULTANEOUS**
    - **SPIRIT-Led**
  - **INNOCENT** = victorious, Christ-like BE-ing!

**VIDEO:** *“Ordinary Ordination Sermon summary”*

**T/S:** Don't disconnect this verse from Matthew 7:15 / Acts 20:29

## II. BEWARE (Hear the imperative command!)

Jesus INTRODUCES THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP!

*While it is unnatural for a shepherd to send his sheep into such certain peril. Yet that is where Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sends His disciples — into the hostile world of ungodly souls, because that is where they can serve Him best and be most effective in winning others to Him.*

*We do not hear much preaching today of sinners needing to count the cost of salvation **and repenting** of sin in confessing the lordship of Christ, or of coming to Him humbly, devoid of pride and self-trust, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and entering the **narrow gate** and **walking** the narrow road of **righteousness**... Rarely are Christians called to take up their crosses and follow Christ in moving out into the world as sheep led to slaughter. The **popular** appeal is to ease, comfort, riches, advancement, and ambition—and the church often uses that kind of enticement to motivate unbelievers to trust in Christ and to motivate believers to follow Him. But **Jesus makes no such offer.** To the disciple He promises hardship, suffering, and death.*

– MacArthur

Jesus The Christ was not JUST the most holy, loving, righteous, forgiving, person to ever live – past, present, or future... No. He was/is also the MOST strong & courageous, the truest, MOST tested & tough, the MOST unwavering & unstoppable, the MOST passionate & persevering, the MOST dedicated & devoted WARRIOR of ALL time!

**CHRISTIANITY IS NOT FOR WIMPS OR WUSSIES!**

(cf. REV. 21:8 – CHURCHY-COWARDS ARE COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANS!)

**T/S:** Jesus proceeds to identify the “wolves” and then gives warnings about four areas in which they persecute believers—in religion, government, family, and society...

## 1. BEWARE MEN

*17 “But beware of men...”*

- This is NOT a gender or age term...
- Here MEN means “people”
  - NOT just SOME but ALL
    - Men AND women
    - Old AND young
    - Jews AND gentiles
  - YET... “some” more than others!
    - While shrewd watches all...
    - It watches some more than others.

## 2. “BEWARE RELATIONSHIPS”

THE WOLVES OF WHOM BELIEVERS ARE TO BEWARE ARE MEN/PEOPLE. THE **ULTIMATE** ENEMIES AGAINST WHOM WE STRUGGLE ARE SATAN AND HIS DEMONIC HOSTS, THE *NON FLESH-AND-BLOOD “RULERS, ... POWERS, ... WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, [AND] SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES” (EPH. 6:12)*. BUT THE **AGENTS** OF THOSE SUPERNATURAL ENEMIES ARE **HUMAN BEINGS**. IT IS THROUGH MEN THAT SATAN OPPOSES AND PERSECUTES THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST. MEN/PEOPLE ARE THE WOLVES WHO MALIGN, OPPRESS, IMPRISON, TORTURE, AND KILL GOD’S PEOPLE.

- MacArthur

17 **“But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you...”**

- Beware hands that learn you but don't love you!
- **Beware those who “hand you over” to others...**
- Beware any & all hands that cannot be trusted!

### **3. BEWARE RELIGIONIST** leaders/influencers

17 **...they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;**

Note it's “their” vs. “our” or “your” synagogues...

The leaders of false religions or false-shepherds over true religion are always at war with God's sent-ones.

(NOTE: Sometimes they're false shepherds & other times false sheep! Mt.7:15)

When we do not manifest Christ, we do not incite the world's wrath. The Christian who mimics the world, or simply keeps his faith to himself, is in little danger from the world, because he manifests little of His Lord's nature. The world attacks us only when it sees Christ in us. – MacArthur

William Barclay: “the man with a message from God has to undergo the hatred and enmity of a **fossilized orthodoxy.**”

## 4. BEWARE GOVERNMENT leaders/influencers

**18** and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Government is ordained by God  
but manipulated by Satan... - MacArthur

## 5. BEWARE FAMILY

**21** "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death."

Believers are promised that they may even be persecuted by their own families.

- It started when Cain killed Abel & it hasn't stopped yet.
- Ask our Christian family who converted from Islam.
- Ask our Christian BRIDGE brothers who left Hinduism.

**STRONGER THAN NATURAL LOVE ARE THE LOVE  
THAT IS OF GOD AND THE HATRED  
THAT IS OF SATAN.**

## 6. BEWARE CULTURE/SOCIETY

**22** "You will be hated by all because of My name,

A. *You will be hated...*

a. *YOU*

It's PERSONAL

b. *WILL BE*

It's GUARANTEED

c. *HATED*

It's DEEP-SEATED HATRED

B. *You will be hated BY ALL...*

It's UNIVERSAL (God-haters)

C. *because of My name...*

It's CHRISTOLOGICAL!

a. If you are not hated, ask yourself why.

b. If you are hated, ask yourself why.

c. Many are liked for all the wrong reasons.

d. Many are hated for other wrong reasons.

To confront the world the way Jesus, Paul, & the early Church did is to guarantee today, society's wrath against the gospel and those who preach it, just like it did back then.

*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you... (John 15:18ff)*

**T/S: BEHOLD! BEWARE... you better BELIEVE...**

1. Christians are Christ's sent-ones...

2. *Christians are sheep... sent into the midst of... wolves!*

3. Christians are missionaries in the midst of enemies!

a. You better believe & be ready for enemies:

i. Hating, slandering, & fighting against you...

ii. Conspiring with others betraying you in the dark...

1. They use their relationship with you...
2. They use their relationship with others...
3. They use both relationships to manipulate...
4. They use twisted truth, half-truths & full lies.
5. Then they pivot & turn others against you.

- b. You better believe WHO your enemies will BE:
- i. **RELATIONSHIPS YOU TRUST** (1<sup>st</sup> John)
  - ii. **RAVENOUS WOLVES** (Acts 20:29)
  - iii. **ROTTEN RELIGIONISTS**
  - iv. **REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITY**
  - v. **ROGUE FAMILY**
  - vi. **“RELEVANT” CULTURE AT LARGE**

### III. BELIEVE (vv.19-20; 22-23)

*19*“But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. *20*“For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you... *22...it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved *23*“But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.*

- Believe Christians WILL BE handed over.
- Believe Christians NEVER need to worry!
- Believe Christians will be given God’s Word.
- Believe Christians ALWAYS have Christ with us.

- Believe Christians who are pure... endure it all!
- Believe Christians being sanctified are saved.
- Believe the both/and principle of Christlikeness.
  - Shrewd without Innocence = CUNNING
  - Innocent without Shrewd = NAÏVE/GULLIBLE
  - Shrewd AND Innocent = CHRIST-LIKENESS
- Believe sometimes you stay, sometimes you go...
- Believe God's glory is ALWAYS the goal.
- Believe God's Spirit is ALWAYS the Guide.
- Believe God's Word, will & ways = the guardrails.
- Believe Christ is coming back.
- Believe His commissioning continues until then.
- Believe this is part of His commandments.

- A. Believe GOD (Jesus IS God, LORD, Christ!)
- B. Believe God's WORD
- C. Believe God's AUTHORITY
- D. Believe God's SOVEREIGNTY (and PROVIDENCE)
- E. Believe Christ's Church are His SENT SHEEP
- F. Believe Satan's worst are real spiritual WOLVES
- G. Believe this life & world at large are WARZONES
- H. Believe in your need for biblical SHREWDNESS
- I. Believe in your need for missional INNOCENCE
- J. Believe in the reality of (Biblical) HATRED

Believe Jesus unifies the Church & divides the crowds, many of which are hiding in churches.

**REVIEW: Believe HIM!**

## CLOSE:

HOW TRUE, TOUGH, & TESTED IS YOUR FAITH?  
AND HOW FAITHFUL IS YOUR TOUGHNESS & TRUTH?

Believe the **BEHOLD!** Believe the **BEWARE!**  
Biblically-BELIEVE & BE READY!

**“PAIN HAS A WAY OF TEACHING US...  
WHAT OUR HARD HEADS WON’T LET US LEARN.”**

- Trinity-Rob’s mom

**BE** real & righteous representatives of Christ & Christ-likeness  
(a.k.a. His light of the world, salt of the earth, city set on a hill, His disciples, apostles, sent-ones, witnesses, His miraculously transformed ministers, His appointed, His aroma, His army of ambassadors... God’s children, Christ’s co-missioned, His one true Church).

**WHEN GOD’S KINGDOM IS THRIVING, SATAN  
CAUSES HIS PEOPLE TO REACT AGAINST IT IN  
PROPORTION TO ITS SUCCESS. – MacArthur**

True, tough, & tested Christians are to **BE & BE READY!**

## PRAYER

## STUDY NOTES:

### NIV Application Commentary:

#### Matthew 10:1–42

**H**E CALLED HIS twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup>These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. <sup>9</sup>Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; <sup>10</sup>take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

<sup>11</sup>“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup>If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. <sup>15</sup>I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. <sup>16</sup>I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

<sup>17</sup>“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup>On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup>But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup>for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>21</sup>“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>22</sup>All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup>When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

<sup>24</sup>“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup>It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

<sup>26</sup>“So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup>What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what

is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. <sup>28</sup>Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to turn

“ ‘a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—  
<sup>36</sup>a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.’

<sup>37</sup>“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

<sup>40</sup>“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup>And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

JESUS' MISSION IS now well established. He has announced his central message (4:17), called his first coworkers (4:18–22), articulated his programmatic standard of discipleship (chs. 5–7), and demonstrated his authoritative power (chs. 8–9). Now is the time to expand his influence by sending out his disciples with the same message and power, **because opposition is building**. Jesus will send them first to his people Israel because of their salvation-historical primacy (10:5–15). But he will also **prepare them for a worldwide mission** among the Gentiles (10:16–23). Jesus' training will address directly the characteristics that his disciples will need to embody as they carry out the mission (10:24–42).

Commissioning the Twelve for Mission (10:1–4)

**TWELVE DISCIPLES (10:1).** In answer to the prayer for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field (9:38), Jesus calls his twelve disciples to him, the highest of Christological clues to Jesus' divine identity. Although this is the first time Matthew mentions the Twelve explicitly, the informal way in which they are introduced suggests that they became a recognized group earlier.<sup>2</sup> Matthew is the only New Testament writer to refer to the "twelve disciples" (11:1; 20:17), although the title "the Twelve" occurs regularly elsewhere. Up to this point in the narrative, Matthew has introduced only five of his named disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew (4:18–22; 9:9); here he names the entire group. Mark and Luke name the Twelve in the context of their *calling* (Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–16), while Matthew names them in the context of their *commissioning*.

"Twelve" has obvious salvation-historical significance. The number corresponds to the twelve patriarchs of Israel, the sons of Jacob, from whom the tribes of Israel descended. The twelve disciples symbolize the continuity of salvation history in God's program as Jesus sends them out to proclaim to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that the kingdom of heaven has arrived (cf. 10:5–6). But there is discontinuity as well, because the Twelve will sit on twelve thrones judging the house of Israel (cf. 19:28). The arrival of the kingdom of heaven in Jesus' ministry demands an appropriate response from his chosen people Israel. In the gathering of the twelve disciples, we find the hint that Jesus is indeed the messianic king of Israel who has come to unite the people of God in all ages. The same authority that characterized Jesus' ministry in chapters 8–9 is now given to the Twelve. Like Jesus, this authority enables them to drive out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and sickness (10:1; cf. 4:23; 9:35). All that the Twelve will accomplish is based on their having received Jesus' authority. Disciples of every era will find their own authority only by submitting to Jesus. In their call, disciples were conscripted to kingdom service (4:18–22); in their instruction of the Sermon on the Mount, disciples learned how to live the kingdom life (chs. 5–7); now in their commission, disciples go out with the power and message of the kingdom (10:1–5; cf. 9:6, 8; 28:18–20).

"Evil" or "unclean" spirits are mentioned only one other time in Matthew's Gospel (12:43), but they are the same malevolent spirit beings called "demons" elsewhere (e.g., 8:28–32). The advance of the kingdom of heaven in Jesus' ministry continually encounters spiritual warfare. Unclean spirits are in rebellion against God and are capable of inflicting mental, moral, and physical harm on humans. Demon-possessed people are healed alongside other illnesses (e.g., 4:25), and demons being cast out indicate that the time of God's judgment has begun upon the stranglehold of evil over this world (8:16, 17, 29).

As the Twelve cast out demons and heal diseases, it validates the reality of the presence of the kingdom of heaven, so that people should turn to Jesus as the messianic deliverer. But their authoritative mission is also an exercise of control over Satan's realm of rule on this earth. No longer is Satan the uncontested ruler of this world. He has met his match, and more, in the arrival of Jesus. And Satan's evil forces are similarly subdued, as Jesus' emissaries go out with his authority to bring release to those held captive.

**Twelve apostles (10:2–4).** The disciples are also "apostles" (10:2). The term *apostle* has a significantly different meaning than *disciple*. The latter designates anyone who has believed in Jesus, while *apostle* designates one who has been commissioned to be his representative. This is a clue to the role of the Twelve. As disciples the Twelve are examples of what Jesus accomplishes in all believers; as apostles the Twelve are set aside as the leaders within the new

movement. Further, this is a clue that the Twelve will transition from the time of Jesus' historical earthly ministry, when they are sent out as disciples to Israel (10:5–15), to the time of his ascended ministry, when they are sent out as apostles to the nations (10:16–23).

Matthew uses the word “apostle” only here, and he is the only Gospel writer to use the expression “the Twelve apostles” (cf. Rev. 21:14). “Apostle” has narrow and wide meanings in the New Testament. The narrow sense, as here, is the usual meaning, signifying the special authoritative representatives chosen by Jesus to play a foundational role in the establishment of the church. Paul normally used the term to refer to the Twelve, but he includes himself among them as a special apostle to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 15:8–10). The wide sense of “apostle” derives from the verb *apostello*, “I send” (e.g., 10:5), and therefore can mean merely “messenger” (John 13:16), refer to Jesus as “the apostle and high priest whom we confess” (Heb 3:1), or designate an individual such as Barnabas, Titus, or Epaphroditus within the group of missionaries larger than the Twelve and Paul.

“The Twelve” are significant in the foundational days of the early church. They appear in the days before Pentecost, and they function as a group in the earliest days after Pentecost. They provide leadership for the distribution of food in the dispute between factions of the disciples (Acts 6:2). From that point on, however, we do not find the title “the Twelve” used in the narrative of Acts, nor does the title appear in the New Testament letters. Four times a listing of the Twelve occurs in the New Testament.

### Lists of the Twelve

*Matthew 10:2–4*

*Mark 3:16–19*

*Luke 6:13–16*

*Acts 1:13*

#### First group of four

- |                                       |  |                             |        |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------|
| 1. first, Simon (who is called Peter) | Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter) | Simon (whom he named Peter) | Peter  |
| 2. his brother Andrew                 | James son of Zebedee                   | Andrew                      | John   |
| 3. James son of Zebedee               | John                                   | James                       | James  |
| 4. his brother John                   | Andrew                                 | John                        | Andrew |

#### Second group of four

- |                |             |             |             |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 5. Philip      | Philip      | Philip      | Philip      |
| 6. Bartholomew | Bartholomew | Bartholomew | Thomas      |
| 7. Thomas      | Matthew     | Matthew     | Bartholomew |

8. Matthew the tax collector	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
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**Third group of four**

9. James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus
10. Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
11. Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Judas son of James	Judas son of James
12. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him	Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him	Judas Iscariot, a traitor.	

The structure of the list of the Twelve is significant.

1. Matthew organizes the names in pairs, which is especially recognizable in the Greek text, corresponding to Mark's statement that Jesus sent the Twelve out two by two (Mark 6:7).
2. Within the Twelve is a recognizable division into three groups of four. The first name in each group remains the same in all the lists (the first, fifth, and ninth place is occupied, respectively, by Peter, Philip, and James of Alphaeus). The order of the rest of the names varies. The sequence of the groups is the same in each list. This grouping suggests that the Twelve were organized into smaller units, each with a leader.
3. The first group is composed of those two pairs of brothers who were the first called— Peter and Andrew, James and John (Matt. 4:18–22), commonly called the “inner circle.” However, on some significant occasions only Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus, such as the healing of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37–40) and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2); they were the audience of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:3; Andrew is included), and they were with Jesus during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37).
4. Peter heads all the lists. He is regularly the spokesman for the Twelve, and during the days of the early church he fulfills Jesus' prediction that he will play a foundational role as the rock of the church and holder of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>13</sup> Peter is called “first” (e.g., 10:2) in the sense that he is first among equals as the leader of the Twelve.
5. The Twelve are normally mentioned as a group, with only occasional focus on individuals. Not much is known about the individual lives of the Twelve, except what is known from brief biblical data and from some statements by the early church fathers.
6. The Twelve display a remarkable personal diversity, which may have been part of the reason for their effectiveness in reaching Israel (see Contemporary Significance). Peter, Andrew, James, and John were partners in a successful business in the fishing industry on the Sea of Galilee (see 4:18–22). Matthew was a hated tax collector (see comments

on 9:9). Simon the Zealot had been a zealous revolutionary, willing to die for his cause of liberating Israel from Rome by guerilla warfare tactics. At any other occasion these men might have been ready to stick a knife into each other, but here they are all part of one group around Jesus.

7. Judas Iscariot, always listed last, is also noted as the one “who betrayed him.” “Iscariot” most likely denotes Judas’s place of origin, since his father is described as “Simon Iscariot” (John 6:71). Judas was the treasurer for the apostolic band (John 12:4–6); hence, we may assume that he displayed positive characteristics recognizable by the others.

### **Instructions for the Short-Term Mission to Israel (10:5–15)**

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR the disciples/apostles’ mission is the second of the five major discourses in Matthew’s Gospel (see the introduction). This discourse is divided into three basic sections: missionary instructions for that particular historical context (10:5–15), a preview of the disciples’ role as missionaries in the future (10:16–42), and principles of discipleship for disciple-missionaries of every era (10:24–42)

**The prohibition (10:5–6).** Jesus begins with a surprising prohibition: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” The mission is apparently restricted to Jewish Galilee, which was surrounded on all sides by Gentile country except to the south, where lay Samaria. The full expression is “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” which does not denote a certain portion of Israel that is lost but rather the whole lost Israel, which is being called to make a decision about the gospel of the kingdom.

The key to the prohibition is found here. This is a special mission of Jesus’ disciples during his ministry to the crowds of Israel, who are like harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd (9:36). Jesus goes first to Israel (cf. 15:21–28) to fulfill the salvation-historical order that God established, with Israel being the tool he will use to bring blessing to the world. Then he will charge the Eleven to continue the historical outworking by going to the nations (28:19–20). Paul later saw this as the priority of the Jews in salvation, for God’s plan is “first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16; 2:9–10). Jesus’ attention to Israel underscores God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises, the continuity of his purposes, and his plan for Israel.

Why does Jesus even bother to give such a prohibition, given the fact that the Twelve would not likely go the Gentiles and Samaritans anyway (cf. the antipathy of the early church in Acts 10; 11:1–4; 15)? Most likely, Jesus is dispelling any doubt as to whether he truly is the Messiah who fulfills the promises given to Israel and God’s program of salvation history. But there is also a warning here. The eschatological ingathering is beginning. This is Israel’s opportunity, and from here on it will be fully responsible for its own decision.

**Message and miracles (10:7–8a).** The message of the disciples is the same as that of both John the Baptist and Jesus: “The kingdom of heaven is near” (see comments on 3:2; 4:17). They also go with the same authority as Jesus (10:1)—to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.” The power of the Twelve is clearly an extension of Jesus’ own power and is to be exercised in the same manner. The commission to raise the dead harks back to Jesus’ stupendous miracle of raising Jairus’s daughter (9:25–26).

**Equipment for the mission (10:8b–10).** The disciples have benefited from the gift of the kingdom of heaven—in the message they have believed, in their authority over unclean spirits, disease, and sickness (10:1), and in the commission they now receive. They likewise are to give this ministry of the gospel freely to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: “Freely you have received, freely give.” They are not to accept payment from those to whom they minister, which would otherwise make it a mercenary venture. Jesus gives them their authoritative power as a gift, so they must not take payment for performing miracles.

Furthermore, they are not to “take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.” Jesus is not prohibiting them from owning these items but rather is stressing the urgency and requirements of the mission. The Twelve are not to spend time procuring extra supplies as though they are going to be out in foreign lands for an extended period of time.

There are two reasons for this prohibition. (1) This is a relatively quick preaching tour through the Galilean countryside. To procure extensive supplies is unnecessary. (2) Jesus insists that “the worker is worth his keep.” On this brief mission tour the Twelve are to accept the hospitality extended to them as traveling missionaries, so they will not need money or extra clothing or equipment. It is the responsibility of those to whom they minister to support their mission (10:10). Although they may not charge for their ministry, the Twelve are to accept the hospitality extended to them for those to whom they minister (cf. 3 John 5–8).

**Worthy of the mission (10:11–14).** While the Twelve are on the mission journey, they must “search for some worthy person.” The word “worthy” (*axios*; trans. “deserving” in 10:13) does not point to a person who has a high moral or religious stature but indicates someone who responds positively to the message proclaimed by the disciples. An individual, a house, or a city (10:11, 12, 14) that receives the greeting—which Luke tells us is “Peace be to this house” (Luke 10:5)—recognizes that the Twelve are emissaries of God and thus receives their message. If the household does not receive God’s message and messengers, then the missionaries are to shake the dust off of their feet when they leave. It was a sign used by Jews when leaving Gentile regions that they have removed completely unclean elements (*b. Sanh.* 12a). For the missionaries it is an acted parable of judgment on those rejecting the mission message. Paul practiced this symbol when he left regions where his message was rejected (Acts 13:51).

**Judgment for rejecting the mission (10:15).** The element of judgment implied thus far is now explicit: “I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” The preaching of the gospel becomes for Israel a threat as well as a promise. Increased light of God’s revelation makes for increased responsibility, and those who have been exposed to Jesus’ ministry and the witness of the disciples have greater responsibility for that privilege (see also 11:20–24). The whole scene exudes urgency because the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry is short and both the blessings of the kingdom and the punishment of judgment are awaiting a decision from Israel.

## Instructions for the Long-Term Mission to the World (10:16–23)

***SHEEP AMONG WOLVES*** (10:16a). The theme of judgment on Israel for rejecting the mission of the Twelve leads to a surprising reversal of the sheep metaphor: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.” Up to now the disciples are to go to the sheep—that is, the crowds who are harassed and helpless, the lost people of Israel (9:36; 10:6). **But now they themselves are the sheep, being sent out among wolves** (cf. also Luke 10:3). Why this reversal? Because...

**JESUS IS DEALING WITH A DIFFERENT SUBJECT. IN THE FIRST PART OF THE COMMISSIONING, HE GAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE DISCIPLES ABOUT THEIR SHORT-TERM MISSION TO ISRAEL DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY. NOW HE IS GIVING THEM INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT THEIR LONG-TERM MISSION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AFTER THAT MINISTRY.**

### **How do we know?**

(1) Jesus changes from the present tense to future tense. The future tense marks off a distinctively different future ministry.

(2) This ministry involves a witness to “Gentiles” (10:18), whom the Twelve were warned to bypass (10:5). This suggests the worldwide mission of the Great Commission (28:18–20).

(3) Throughout this second section Jesus prepares the disciples for intense persecution, which they did not experience during Jesus’ earthly ministry.

(4) The appearance of similar warnings in 24:9–13 and Mark 13:9–13, which record Jesus’ message of the end times, indicates that he is here including warnings about the treatment that missionary disciples will endure until the coming of Jesus at the end of the age.

**MATTHEW MAKES NO REFERENCE TO THE TWELVE EITHER ACTUALLY GOING OUT OR RETURNING FROM THEIR MISSION. IN THIS WAY, THE COMMISSION IS SUFFICIENTLY OPEN-ENDED TO INCLUDE BOTH INSTRUCTIONS FOR AN IMMEDIATE MISSION TO ISRAEL AND THE ONGOING MISSION TO THE NATIONS UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE.**

The historical setting of Jesus' sending of the Twelve to the people of Israel has provided an occasion for him to lay down instruction for Christian missions to all nations.

***Wise serpents, harmless doves*** (10:16b). Along with the reversal of the sheep metaphor, Jesus warns his disciples that wariness, yet innocence, will be necessary in the future mission. They must venture out as defenseless sheep in the midst of ravenous wolves, but what will keep them alert to dangers is to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (10:16). The serpent was the emblem of wisdom, shrewdness, and intellectual keenness (Gen. 3:1; Ps. 58:5), while the dove represented simple innocence (Hos. 7:11). This is a difficult but necessary balance to maintain.

**WITHOUT INNOCENCE THE KEENNESS OF THE SNAKE IS CRAFTY, A DEVIOUS MENACE; WITHOUT KEENNESS THE INNOCENCE OF THE DOVE IS NAIVE, HELPLESS GULLIBILITY.**

Schweizer notes, **“The caution of the disciples is to consist not in clever diplomatic moves but in the purity of a life that is genuine and wears no masks”** (cf. also Rom. 16:19).

***Flogging in the Jewish synagogue*** (10:17).

## **JESUS' WARNING IS NOW EXPLICIT:**

*“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.”*

This language echoes Jesus' prophetic statement of the way that Jewish religious leaders will mistreat missionaries (cf. 23:33–34).

The synagogue was not only the place of assembly for worship but also an assembly of justice, where discipline was exercised (cf. John 9:35).

Note that it is not “our” or “your” synagogues; it is “their” synagogues. The synagogue belongs to those opposed to Jesus' disciples.

***A witness to Gentiles* (10:18–20).** THE DISCIPLES' FUTURE MISSION WILL BRING THEM “BEFORE GOVERNORS AND KINGS AS WITNESSES TO THEM AND TO THE GENTILES.” Acts records times in which early church leaders were first called before Jewish officials of the national council (Acts 4:1–22; 5:17; 7:12.), later before the ruling authorities in Israel (12:1–4; 21:27–23:11), and finally before the rulers of the Roman world (14:5; 16:19–34; 17:1–9; 18:12–17; 23:24–26:32; 28:17–31). At the time of their trials, the mission-disciples will witness to these ruling figures of the truthfulness of the gospel message brought by Jesus.

In their future mission, the disciples are to depend on the Holy Spirit to speak through them in the moment of their most difficult opposition. The Spirit is the creative, empowering, guiding force in Jesus' own life (1:18, 20; 3:11, 16; 4:1; 12:18, 28). Through this same Spirit his disciples will find their own empowering and guidance to give their witness.

***The disciples' opposition and endurance* (10:21–23).**

Not only will opposition come from Jewish and Gentile officials but also from the disciples' close family relations:

***“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.”***

Moses had warned the people that even if one's own brother or sister or wife or closest friend tries to beguile a person into idolatry, this person was to be stoned (Deut. 13:6–11). In the future, some may think that the disciples are leading the people into idolatry with their call to worship Jesus; as a result, **the mission-disciples will be delivered over to persecution and death. This will be a tragic misperception** of Jesus' identity and message.

**Along with family betrayal because of their commitment to Jesus' exclusivity, his disciples will feel the wrath and hatred of *“all men ... because of me”* (cf. also 24:9).** An element of hyperbole may be included, but this statement indicates an unavoidable consequence that comes from attachment to Jesus and his message. The phrase *“because of me”* is literally *“because of my name”* and is **an important Christological expression (cf. 5:11; 24:9) that harks back to the Old Testament significance of God's name as representing his person as the sole focus of Israel's worship and allegiance (e.g., Ex. 3:15; 6:3; 9:16; 20:7).**

**JESUS' DISCIPLES WILL HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF CARRYING HIS NAME, BUT IT ALSO BRINGS SUFFERING, BECAUSE THE HATRED DIRECTED AGAINST HIM WILL NATURALLY FALL ON HIS FOLLOWERS** (cf. John 15:21; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:13–14).

But Jesus promises that “he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (see also 24:13). By this statement Jesus gives great assurance that in spite of an increase in persecution, the hatred of humanity will not overcome his disciples. Active resistance may be included in standing firm, but much more in view is their enduring fortitude under any circumstance, including the most hateful persecution. Those who endure until the end of the age, when the Son of Man comes, or to the end of their lives will be saved.

**“*SAVED*” HERE DOES NOT MEAN RESCUE FROM DEATH, FOR MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN MARTYRED.**

Instead, Jesus gives both a concrete promise and a cautionary reminder. **His *promise* is that the one who remains committed to his name to the end will not be consumed by the persecution but will experience the full blessing and peace of kingdom’s salvation.**

**THE *REMINDER* IS THAT THE TEST OF A DISCIPLE’S REAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS IS WHETHER HE OR SHE REMAINS STEADFAST TO THE END.**

Jesus through his Spirit will provide the resources to withstand whatever difficulties may come (10:19–20); in fact, Jesus himself will be with them to the end of the age to see them through (28:20).

With **the mention of “the end” (10:22)**, Jesus **culminates the prophetic aspect of the commissioning** with a remarkable statement: “I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” **This is one of the most problematic verses in the Bible.**

**What does “before the Son of Man comes” mean in this context?**

Some suggest that:

1. Jesus is promising the disciples that they will witness the final coming of the Son of Man while they are on their first Palestinian mission, or
2. at his resurrection, or
3. at Pentecost, or
4. at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
5. Others contend that this promise is to be associated with the coming of the Son of Man at the end of the age.

The latter seems to fit the larger context here. While the Jews have priority of salvation (10:6) and of judgment (10:15), their judgment will not permanently exclude them from God’s eschatological promises. The ongoing mission to the nations includes both Jew and Gentile (see comments on 28:18–20). **As Jesus offers comfort to the mission-disciples about their ultimate salvation (10:22), he warns them not to abandon Israel.**

When persecuted in one city, they should flee to the next, because the mission to Israel will not conclude before the Son of Man returns.

In other words...

*there will be a continuing mission to Israel alongside the mission to the Gentiles until the Parousia. In spite of Israel's hard-heartedness, God will remain faithful to his covenant promises to her.*

The mission-disciples must remain faithful to their calling to preach to everyone regardless of persecution, family alienation, and ostracism. This is a powerful apologetic to the Jews both in Jesus' ministry and to those within hearing of Matthew's Gospel: God has not abandoned his covenantal promises. It is also a challenging, yet sober call to the mission-disciples to endure to the end with the message of the gospel to all peoples—both Jew and Gentile.

### **Characteristics of Missionary Disciples (10:24–42)**

JESUS' MISSION CHARGE has included instructions to his disciples during his earthly ministry (10:5–15) and instructions to apostles/disciples in a worldwide mission until his return at the end of the age (10:16–23). This last section gives characteristics of discipleship that are to guide all disciples as they carry out Jesus' mission to the world.

**Disciples and the Master in mission (10:24–25).** This section opens with sayings that are central in importance: "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master." The word "student" is *mathetes*, the common word for "disciple." The ultimate goal of a disciple is to be like the master—a general principle of master-disciple relations in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. This general principle of discipleship also applies to relations with Jesus as Teacher and Master. His disciples have received his authority, so they go out with his message and power (10:1, 7–8). The harsh treatment that he is now beginning to receive from the religious leaders will be their lot as well in the ongoing mission.

The Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out demons by the "prince of demons" (9:34), another name for Satan. That identity is further revealed to be "Beelzebub"—or better, "Beelzeboul" (meaning "master of the house"), as Jesus' play on words with "head of the house" (*oikodespotes*) indicates: "If the head of the house has been called [Beelzeboul], how

much more the members of his household!" The term Beelzebub most likely comes from an identification of the chief of the evil spirits with Baal Shamayim, whose worship was installed in the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The accusation that Jesus has formed an alliance with Satan to carry out his work will naturally be lodged against his disciples as well.

**Fearless followers (10:26–31).** Since the charges against Jesus are false and unfounded, "do not be afraid of them." Jesus then gives three reasons why his followers should not be afraid. (1) The truth about his ministry will become known: "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Eventually the subversive opposition to his ministry conducted in the hidden counsel of the religious leaders will be revealed as false.

Jesus also knows that shallow exuberance and vicious opposition will come from revealing his true identity and mission, because the crowds will misunderstand it and it will be a threat to the religious establishment. Thus, he has consistently called for secrecy (see comments on 8:4; 9:30). But the time is approaching when the secret message will be broadcast universally, as if a person climbed to the top of the flat roof of one's home and shouted across the city.

(2) The next reason why mission-disciples should not be afraid is because their eternal destiny is secure. The sober call to mission commitment until the end of the age included the stark reality that persecution may result even in loss of life (10:21), so Jesus gives his disciples reassurance why they should not be afraid: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." This is a call to courage in the face of persecution. Jesus' disciples might abandon their mission out of fear, so their work should take precedence over what anyone might do to them. Hell is near (10:28), and one who is afraid of confessing Jesus as Messiah is in danger of a far greater judgment than physical death. Therefore, to carry on the mission is to receive the blessings of the Father (10:32). Jesus' sayings bring comfort and encouragement, for there is a limit to what humans can do to them. If the disciples persevere, they will be rewarded, but if they are disloyal to the truth of the gospel message, they will face ultimate condemnation.

(3) His disciples should not be afraid as they embark on their mission in this world, because of the Father's unrelenting sovereign supervision over their lives, as testified in 10:29–31. The "sparrow" is proverbially the smallest of creatures and the penny (*assarion*) is one of the smallest and least in value of the Roman coins (cf. *quadrans* in 5:26). If the heavenly Father gives constant sovereign supervision to such insignificant creatures, surely he will for mission-disciples whose every detail, even to the number of hairs on their head, he knows. It is to these disciples that their Father has sent his beloved Son (3:17), so he will surely give them absolute sovereign care. Do not fear when persecution comes, for God is aware and in control.

**Acknowledging Jesus' supremacy in public (10:32–33).** The test of a disciple's commitment to Jesus and his mission will come when opposition arises. The easiest way to avoid persecution is to deny that one is Jesus' disciple. But the true disciple does not fear death (10:28), so she will publicly acknowledge or confess Jesus as her Master (10:24–25) and God, the Son of the heavenly Father (10:32). This public discipleship to Jesus is eternal, for Jesus will likewise acknowledge her to his Father, another statement of the exclusive relationship that Jesus and the Father enjoy (cf. 7:21). But the disciple who attempts to avoid persecution by public denial of Jesus reveals that he is not a true disciple and has not publicly confessed Jesus as his Master and God. Such denial results in eternal rejection by the Father.

**Allegiance to Jesus' supremacy at home (10:34–39).** We have here another statement of Jesus' explanation of the reason for which "I have come." The public nature of discipleship will test the disciples' confession, and the private nature of discipleship will test their absolute allegiance to Jesus. The latter testing comes at home. In the first place, confession of Jesus will divide family members: "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." This is one of the truly radical sayings of Jesus in the social milieu of first-century Judaism, showing that he has not come simply to mollify the status quo.

The "sword" in 10:34 is a metaphorical sword, as proven by Jesus' rebuke of those who took up an actual sword to defend him in the Garden of Gethsemane (26:52). The sword can be a metaphor of God's judgment (Ps. 7:12) or, as here, a metaphor of separation between those who believe and those who don't, even if it is in one's family. Earlier Jesus revealed that opposition to his mission would come from the disciples' closest family relations (see comments on 10:21–23). Thus, Jesus' claim to messianic identity and authority is a divider between people, including one's own family. One either believes in Jesus or rejects him; there is no middle ground. Before Jesus' own family finally came to recognize his true identity and mission, they also opposed him (13:53–58; Mark 3:21; John 7:3–5). So, like their Master, Jesus' disciples can expect division to occur in their family as members try to prevent them from furthering Jesus' mission.

Furthermore, discipleship to Jesus means that he has unqualified supremacy over the disciples' lives: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." In a return to the expression "worthy" (*axios*; see comments on 10:11), Jesus indicates his form of discipleship calls for giving him ultimate supremacy beyond parents or children, something not even the most esteemed rabbi would demand. This is an implicit declaration of his deity, because only God deserves higher place of honor than one's father and mother. A precedent for this is found in Moses' commendation to the tribe of Levi:

He said of his father and mother,  
"I have no regard for them."  
He did not recognize his brothers  
or acknowledge his own children,  
but he watched over your word  
and guarded your covenant. (Deut. 33:9–10)

Giving rightful place to family presumes giving obedience first to God, which will then enable a person to honor appropriately one's father and mother, sons and daughters. The strength of attachment to family in Israel had a tendency at times to supplant commitment to God (see comments on 8:21–22). Jesus' statement here is in line with the call there to give priority to Jesus as God above all else, even one's dearest loved ones. To take up one's cross is a metaphor that means to take up God's will for one's life, in the same way that the cross was the Father's will for the Son's life. Taking up God's will for one's life will result in gaining true life as Jesus' disciple (see comments on 16:24–26).

**Reward for receiving Jesus' mission-disciples (10:40–42).** Jesus concludes this Mission Discourse by reiterating that the mission is his, because the missionaries go out with his message and his authority (10:1, 7). He speaks directly to the disciples/apostles, who have been

the subject of the discourse throughout (cf. 10:1–2, 5): “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.” The mission-disciples include the original Twelve (10:5–15) and all future disciples until the Son of Man returns (10:16–23, 24–25). Mission-disciples go in the authority and with the message of Jesus himself, so to receive them is to receive Jesus. This includes a “prophet,” a “righteous man,” and a “little one.”

The “prophets” and the “righteous” are linked elsewhere (13:17; 23:29); here they refer to Christian prophets (cf. 23:34) and righteous persons (cf. 13:43, 49; 25:37, 46). These distinctions are not mutually exclusive. “Prophet” refers to one who speaks for God (cf. 5:10–12; 7:15–23); “righteous man” is a generic category for one who has the righteousness of the kingdom that comes from obeying Jesus (cf. 5:20), including the righteous people of earlier generations who by faith looked forward to the arrival of God’s gracious redemption (cf. Rom. 4:1–25). To receive either means to receive Jesus’ gospel of the kingdom and live under its authority and so receive life’s greatest reward—kingdom salvation and kingdom life. Prophets and righteous men have already been blessed with that reward upon their own entrance to the kingdom of heaven, and their great privilege is to share it with others (cf. 5:12).

The context of the reward for receiving missionary disciples who have sacrificed and experienced persecution blends with reward for treating well the “little ones,” a theme that will resurface significantly in the eschatological discourse (cf. 25:31–46). “Little ones” points explicitly to needy disciples and emphasizes that they are often the ones excluded from care, since attention is given usually to prominent members of the discipleship community. This is in line with the admonition Jesus gave to the disciples as they were arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (18:1). There, he advised them to become like children, because receiving children in his name is like receiving Jesus (18:2–5).

This is also in line with James’s rebuke of his church for showing partiality to the rich in the church while dishonoring the poor (cf. James 2:1). So Jesus affirms that believers are to care for one another, but especially the least and insignificant among them, particularly those who are most needy but have given unqualified commitment to Jesus’ mission.

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IN THIS SECOND discourse of Jesus in this Gospel, Matthew provides us another crucial collection of Jesus’ commands that disciples are to be taught to obey (28:20). In the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7), Jesus delineated the principles for his followers that are to characterize their lives as “kingdom-life” disciples in our everyday world. This second discourse, the Mission

Discourse, develops what it means to be “mission-driven disciples.” Jesus’ disciples are to go out to share and live the message of the gospel of the kingdom of God to an alien and often hostile world.

**Four primary topics surface here.**

## **Mission. The first is “mission.”**

This includes several important features.

### **1. Jesus lays out God’s salvation-historical mission of**

**redemption.** The disciples first go to Israel to fulfill God’s covenantal promises (10:6), but then they are to go to the Gentiles (10:18). They will continue with the two-pronged mission to Jews and Gentiles throughout the age until Jesus returns (10:23). The mission-disciples must be appropriately equipped in each phase. The urgent mission to Israel during Jesus’ historical ministry required preparation unique to that setting (cf. 10:5–15), which should be wisely evaluated so that no unwarranted application is made to the later worldwide mission (10:16–42).

### **2. The disciples are to go with the same authoritative message and power that characterized Jesus’ mission (10:1–8).**

### **3. Since the mission charge is addressed to disciples, mission is a responsibility of all believers (10:24–25, 40–42), not just a special category of persons. It occurs in both public confession to the world (10:32–33) and in private commitments to one’s family (10:34–39).**

4. Like Jesus, disciples can expect opposition and persecution (10:24–25) from Jews and Gentiles alike, as well as one’s own closest family and companions (10:17–21). **JESUS IS THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN THE ENTIRE WORLD AND HIS DISCIPLES (10:22).**
5. The source of the disciples’ power and guidance is the Spirit (10:19–20) and the source of their care and control is the sovereign will of the Father (10:28–33). Disciples, therefore, should have no fear (10:26–27).
6. Mission is a community issue, as the one who receives shares the reward of the one who carries the message (10:40–42).
7. Mission includes not only proclamation and displays of God’s power but also care for the needy among them (10:42).
8. Mission includes spiritual transformation. The centrality of Jesus in the life of the disciples is the most vital characteristic of the mission, so that the disciples increasingly grow to be like the Master (10:24).
9. All of these issues prepare and equip Jesus’ disciples to undertake with boldness and effectiveness the mission with which Matthew concludes his Gospel, the Great Commission (28:18–20), which is the key to understanding Matthew’s overall purpose for writing.

## Particularism and universalism.

One of the well-known difficulties of studying Matthew’s Gospel is to try to understand the tension between the particularistic thrust, where Jesus emphasizes a mission only to the lost sheep of Israel (10:6; 15:24), and the universalistic thrust, where Jesus emphasizes a mission to all the nations (28:19). Jesus reserved an undisguised declaration of the universal mission until after the resurrection, but all throughout Matthew there are hints of its coming. This is part of Jesus’ own earthly economy of salvation history, and Matthew emphasizes it for his own apologetic message to his Jewish kinsmen and Jewish-Christian community (see comments on 10:6).

The double horizon of the mission to Israel and then to the nations instructs all disciples of its present universal responsibilities.

TO EMPHASIZE TOO HEAVILY MATTHEW'S PARTICULARISTIC THEMES COULD LEAD ONE TO ACCUSE HIM OF ETHNIC PREJUDICE, BUT TO EMPHASIZE TOO HEAVILY THE UNIVERSAL THEME COULD LEAD ONE TO ACCUSE HIM OF ETHNIC ANTI-SEMITISM. A PROPER BALANCE IS FOUND IN RECOGNIZING GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION HISTORY—TO THE JEW FIRST, THEN TO THE NATIONS.

Jesus' admonition to the disciples to give singular attention to Israel (10:6) underscores God's faithfulness to his covenant promises, but by bearing witness to the Gentiles (10:18), the **MISSION ACCOMPLISHES HIS SALVIFIC PURPOSES FOR ALL OF HUMANITY WHILE DECLARING THAT HIS PLAN FOR ISRAEL WILL NOT BE FINISHED UNTIL THE SON OF MAN RETURNS (10:23).**

## Discipleship.

**Another emphasis of the Mission Discourse is discipleship.**

Matthew has emphasized that there is an incontrovertible solidarity between Jesus and his disciples, including authority (10:1), message (10:1), activity (10:7, 8), mission (10:18), suffering (10:18, 24–25, 38), confession (10:32), and reception (10:40).

Since the Twelve represent the relationship that disciples throughout the ages will enjoy with Jesus (see 28:16–20), the open-ended historical nature of this discourse posits specific examples for our own mission.

However, as we noted above, the Twelve's urgent mission to Israel during Jesus' earthly ministry (e.g., 10:5–15) must be understood historically so that we do not draw unwarranted application. This discourse encourages us to understand that disciples of Jesus will engage in mission and be transformed to meet life's demands by being continually transformed to be like the Master. Discipleship begins by taking up one's cross, which symbolizes God's will for a person's life, and by following Jesus into every situation while on earth. The extended section on the characteristics of mission-disciples draws together those two themes.

*The form of discipleship Jesus has explicitly instituted connects discipleship and mission— all believers are disciples/missionaries, and each role affects the other as they carry out that mission to the world.*

**Persecution and suffering.** Persecution and suffering will be a regular part of discipleship and mission, just as it was of Jesus' life (10:24–25).

Several points may help us to see Jesus' perspective on persecution and suffering.

1. How one bears up under persecution is basically determined by whether one is a disciple or not, which has eternal implications (10:32–34).
2. **Persecution may include rejection, alienation, being hated, and ultimately martyrdom** (10:21–22, 28, 38–39).
3. The severity of persecution and suffering requires us to give unqualified allegiance to Jesus. Jesus warns us not to give priority to any other relationship and not to deny allegiance to him because of fear of persecution. The disciple is not to fear those who can only kill the body; rather, we must fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell (10:28). To deny Jesus here on earth is to be denied by the Father in heaven (10:33).
4. **Jesus' disciples can expect to be maligned and to have falsehood spread about their message and character, for the same was done to Jesus (10:25). However, they are not to fear this subversive persecution, because eventually they will be vindicated (10:26).**
5. **Most important, while experiencing persecution the Spirit will provide power and guidance to speak the right words of witness for the situation (10:19–20),** and the Father will exercise sovereign control over all circumstances, so the mission-disciples are not to fear that the persecution is out of God's control (10:29–31).

TELEVISION NEWS ANCHOR Tom Brokaw wrote a best-selling, gripping tribute to what he calls *The Greatest Generation*. It is a collection of stories about the generation that grew up in the Great Depression, which was shaken out of everyday life to help save the world by fighting the Second World War on two fronts, and which then immediately undertook the daunting task of rebuilding the economies and political institutions of their own homeland and those of their former enemies.

One of the most important themes that Brokaw wanted to get across is that these were common people who all joined together to face these challenges. It wasn't just an elite group who made up this greatest generation. They were ordinary men and women who answered the call to serve their country in whatever capacity they were gifted and equipped. Some were on the front lines fighting hand to hand with the enemy, while others were on the home front nursing the wounded back to health. Some heroes humbly received Medals of Honor, while other heroes served nobly in the obscurity of a factory. The Allied victory in World War II and the rebuilding of the war-ravaged world could not have been accomplished except for the full mobilization of an entire generation.

When we read the story of Jesus' mission of the Twelve, we can also think of them as the greatest generation of the church. They were called out of the hardship of occupation by the Roman Empire, but they went on to fight a battle, not with swords and chariots but with the good news of the arrival of the kingdom of heaven and a message of transformation. They went on to lay the foundation of the church, and most suffered martyrdom for the name of their Lord Jesus.

Scripture likewise speaks of our own discipleship using the language of warfare, although it is not a war against flesh and blood (e.g., Eph. 6:10–20; cf. 1 Tim. 1:18). Christians are everyday people who have been called to advance the kingdom of God in an alien and hostile world. We are the church, the body of Jesus Christ, some of whose service results in external and public honor while others carry out their service in the humility of obscurity. But each individual is vitally necessary to the proper functioning of the church in this world.

Martin and Gracia Burnham are everyday people. They began serving as missionaries with New Tribes Mission in the Philippines in 1986, where they raised their three children. Martin grew up in the Philippines with his missionary parents, and he wanted to be a mission aviation pilot his entire life. He and Gracia were examples of grace and servanthood both to other missionaries and the Filipino people. While celebrating their eighteenth wedding anniversary at Dos Palmas Resort off Palawan Island, they were kidnapped May 27, 2001, by the Abu Sayyaf

Group, terrorist Filipino rebels. They were held hostage for 376 days in the jungles of Basilan and Mindanao. When a Filipino military group attempted to rescue them, Gracia was wounded and Martin was killed. During their captivity they shared with their captors the food that was sent to them, and they also shared the gospel with them, challenging the rebels' Muslim beliefs.

After Gracia was reunited with her family and children in Rose Hill, Kansas, she said, "We want everyone to know that God was good to us every single day of our captivity. Martin was also a source of strength to the other hostages. He was a good man, and he died well." Dan Germann, an executive with New Tribes Mission, said of Martin and Gracia, "These are people who loved God and didn't reluctantly move toward a mission field. They did it gladly, because their eyes were fixed on Him. In that sense, they are our modern day heroes."

Martin and Gracia are examples to all of us in our own everyday worlds, for **JESUS' MISSIONARY DISCOURSE IS DIRECTED TO ALL WHO ARE COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO CALL THEMSELVES HIS DISCIPLES.** As Martin once said, "I'm not called to the Philippines or to be a missionary. I'm called to serve Christ." And he did—and so shall we, with God's grace. In that sense, every generation of the church is called to be the greatest, because **if it is not for the mobilizing of all disciples, the war for the hearts and souls of lost men and women will be lost.**

## **Mission-driven discipleship.** *Every disciple is a missionary.*

Some of us tend to avoid passages like the Mission Discourse by saying, "Well, how does this relate to me? Those were the twelve apostles. I'm not like them!" But while it does have special significance for the Twelve in their historical ministry, it has immediate relevance for disciples in every era.

**As Jesus calls the twelve disciples to him and gives them authority (10:1), all of us should identify with them *as disciples*. If we call ourselves Christians, we are disciples of Jesus (cf. 5:1–2; 28:18–20), and this passage should impel us to see that mission activity is a vital part of our discipleship to him. The authority and purposes of God have not changed, and thus the principles outlined in this discourse are as relevant today as they were to the original disciples.**

***Every disciple is a missionary,  
but not every missionary goes overseas.***

Equally as important, not all of Jesus' disciples are missionaries who go away from home to a mission tour. Even in Jesus' day many of his disciples did not follow him around or go out on a tour. The Gadarene who had had a demon begged to go with Jesus but was sent back home to tell his townspeople what Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:38–39). We have no evidence that Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus ever left Jerusalem or their occupations, yet they were disciples of Jesus and were used at a critical time to provide him a burial place (Matt. 27:57–61; John 19:38–42). The woman named Tabitha did not leave her hometown, yet she was a servant of God who affected the entire region, both by her actions and the miracle of being raised from the dead (Acts 9:36–43).

While all of us may not become full-time missionaries, it is clear that all disciples are called to join in mission in some fashion. And whether we are more directly involved in mission or conduct more of a support role, the rewards are the same (10:41–42).

The specifics of how one engages in mission should be tailored to one's giftedness and abilities, but a disciple of Jesus will see that carrying the message of salvation to the world is a vital part of our discipleship.

***SUPPORT OF WORLDWIDE MISSION IS THE  
RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL DISCIPLES.***

Much of the evangelistic and teaching ministry of the early church was performed by traveling missionaries who served the various churches and were dependent on the hospitality and gifts of the members of the churches they visited. One striking example is Gaius, who was especially faithful in exercising hospitality (3 John 6); many traveling missionaries shared with John's church how generous Gaius had been. John commends Gaius for his hospitality and encourages him to continue, because these missionaries would not accept help from the unconverted. To receive aid from such people might give the appearance of selling the gospel,

reducing the missionaries to the level of various popular philosophers and religious preachers seeking payment for services.

This speaks to our own responsibility to support the mission work of the church beyond our own personal mission work. When we stay home and support those who go, we are fellow workers with them (3 John 8). And we are to support missionaries “in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 6). **God gives generously to us, his disciples, so we should likewise give generously to mission-disciples involved in full-time mission.** As Howard Marshall states, “Christian ministers and missionaries live in the faith that God will encourage his people to provide for their needs; it is better that such provision err on the side of generosity than stinginess.”

## Transformational discipleship.

Discipleship refers to the process of how Christians are equipped and transformed for this life and battle, to be light in a dark world to those still held in the clutch of the prince of the power of the air. **Those first Twelve disciples/apostles are a great deal more like us than we usually imagine.** We each can look at these men, and the many other men and women who were Jesus’ disciples, and find that we are not much different from them. Look at the brief description of each and see if you can identify with one or more of them:

- Peter—a businessman who was regularly in a leadership position
- Andrew, his brother—a person highly sensitive to God’s leading, though overshadowed by his brother Peter
- James son of Zebedee—who left a successful family business to follow Jesus but was the first apostle martyred
- John, his brother—who had a fiery temper but also a profound love for God
- Philip—never quite one of the inner circle, yet took a leadership role among the lesser-known apostles
- Bartholomew—known for his outspoken honesty (he is probably the one called Nathaniel in John 1:43–51)
- Thomas—a skeptical rationalist who eventually had one of the most profound theological understandings of Jesus’ identity as the God-man
- Matthew the tax collector—formerly a traitor to his own people to support himself and his family but became a missionary to them by writing his Gospel
- James son of Alphaeus—either younger, shorter, or less well known than the other James, faithful throughout his life but never given much recognition for it

- Thaddaeus (or Lebbaeus)—also called Judas son of James, often confused with Judas Iscariot and didn't develop much of his own reputation
- Simon the Zealot—before accepting Jesus as Messiah, a guerrilla fighter who wanted to bring in God's kingdom by force
- Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him—love of money and power may have drawn him to abandon and betray even his closest friends

The Twelve are not to be idealized. We can look at each of them and find that they are not much different from you or me. I don't say that to try to bring them down to our level but rather to emphasize that we are more like them than we may realize. Try identifying realistically with even one of the Twelve, with their individual strengths, yet also with their foibles and failings. Which one are you most like? Can you see the same faults in you that are in one of them? Can you see the same potential for your own unique ministry?

If God could transform their lives, he can transform ours as well. That is the overwhelming passionate story of Jesus' ministry. Our call is to be what Jesus wants to make of us, wherever we happen to be.

You and I may not be involved in a large-scale assault on the evil of this world, but the transformation of those who will respond to the gospel message begins with us, in our own world. **THE TWELVE HAD TO START WITH A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT EACH OF US NEEDS TRANSFORMATION.** The apostle John, for example, was called one of the Sons of Thunder, most likely because of his fiery temper. On one occasion he and his brother James wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven to consume a village of Samaritans that had disrespected Jesus (Luke 9:51–55). But as his own heart was transformed to learn how to love with God's love, he later actually went to those same Samaritans with the gospel (Acts 8:14–17). This is a real transformation that we can all understand. It is a transformation of the heart that ultimately affects every aspect of our being.

## The persecution and suffering of discipleship.

Persecution is another issue in this Mission Discourse that we may think is not relevant to our daily lives. **Many of us live in a culture and society**

that does not experience the same degree of persecution that the early Christians faced. But there are broader principles here that apply to US.

Regardless of how comfortable a life we may live, there are always daily choices that demonstrate our allegiance and submission to the Lord. And invariably, opposition and persecution will follow.

## **Persecution is closer than we think.**

Believers who stand for the name of Jesus as we enter the third millennium are increasingly facing persecution similar to that experienced in the first centuries of the church's existence. Wherever communism, Islam, or nationalism is struggling for dominance, there is a new outbreak of anti-Christian violence and oppression. This has resulted not only in the arrest and imprisonment of Christians but also their torture and execution. In Saudi Arabia, for example, in spite of its strong ties with the United States and other Western countries, persecution and execution of Christians are common. As an Islamic theocracy, the government believes it must preserve a narrow Qur'anic purity and the shrines in Mecca and Medina, which means that denial of religious freedom is integral to its identity.

Oswaldo (Wally) Magdangal, a Filipino pastor whose house church in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, grew too noticeable for the authorities, was arrested for blaspheming Islam. **SHARI'AH LAW REQUIRES BEHEADING FOR "APOSTATES"—THOSE WHO RENOUNCE ISLAM.** Religious police tortured every part of Magdangal's body, trying to force him to renounce his faith, and he was beaten throughout 210 minutes of mocking interrogation. During that time no Friday passed without at least one execution in the public square, and Pastor Wally was sentenced to be executed on Friday, December 25, 1992. But through the combined efforts of Western human rights organizations and his close friends in the Saudi government, God miraculously intervened and Pastor Wally was deported; he is now president of Christians in Crisis, an advocacy group based in Sacramento, California. His goal is to wake up the church to the real persecution that Christians around the world experience every day.

Moreover, the increasing secularization of Western culture does not bode well for us. Christians are discouraged from denouncing practices condemned in Scripture, such as obscenity, pornography, and homosexuality. In the name of "freedom of religion" many of the normal practices of faith once enjoyed—such as public prayers or even displays of a manger scene at Christmas—have been stripped away. The agenda of much public policy seems more like freedom *from* religion, and the consequences for those who decry this secularist public policy will grow increasingly harsh.

Jesus suffered when doing the right and good thing, and persecution marked the fate of the church from its earliest days. Yet it did not dim passion for following Jesus, no matter what the cost. Paul tells young pastor Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). But our consolation is that our suffering unites us to Christ, and we will find a rare fellowship with him when we identify with the suffering he endured, whether in life or in death (Phil. 3:10). The apostle Peter reiterates the same theme that he had heard Jesus give in this Mission Discourse, which will be increasingly relevant for us in the third millennium:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.... If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?  
**(1 Peter 4:12–17)**

For the Christian, suffering is *not* something to be avoided at all costs. Suffering, when it comes, can be a means of furthering our union with Christ, who promises to be united with us in our deepest hour of need.

## Guarding our hearts in the real world.

One of the central cautions of Jesus in this Mission Discourse is that as we live out our lives with him in the world, our hearts become vulnerable to hurt, temptation, and spiritual attacks.

Proverbs tells us, **“ABOVE ALL ELSE, GUARD YOUR HEART, FOR IT IS THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE”** (Prov. 4:23).

**As we take up the armor of God in spiritual warfare, the breastplate of righteousness will guard our hearts (Eph. 6:14).** But Jesus warns us that a delicate balance must be maintained while we walk in this world as mission-disciples: We must guard our hearts from hurt, yet at the same time we must not develop a heart that is so protected that it becomes hardened.

As Jesus gives his prophetic vision to his disciples being sent out into the world, he says, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

Jesus did not call us out of the world into a safe haven of rest. We must venture out as defenseless sheep in the midst of ravenous wolves, so we must guard our hearts. Guarding them means being wise as serpents. We are to know the ways of the world, especially the traps that await us. We must understand clearly how people can hurt and abuse us. There are people in this world who want to dominate us to perpetuate their own self-serving agenda. We must guard ourselves and those for whom we are responsible. We are to be wise about the temptations that will come our way and know how to escape.

At the same time, we are to be innocent as doves. We must not allow our hearts to become so protective and distrustful of the wolves in the world that we harden them.

We should not learn the craftiness of the snake so well that we acquire the heart of a snake. I have said many times in the past, "I don't trust anyone." That statement came from a heart that had been hurt by people. While it is true that many people can't be trusted, I took it too far. I became so distrustful of people that I hurt them by my accusations of false motives or unfaithfulness. A dove doesn't hurt others. A dove brings grace and beauty. The dove is the symbol of peace.

Guarding our hearts in this world is a difficult yet necessary balance as we, mission-disciples, carry the message of the gospel of the kingdom to a world that is dying, eternally, without its message of grace and salvation.

*I don't fancy myself as a part of a "greatest generation," but I do know that I am called to unwavering commitment to bring the gospel of the kingdom to my generation and to those who follow. That is the clarion call of Jesus' Mission Discourse to every generation of the church.<sup>1</sup>*

## MacArthur Commentary:

### **Sheep Among Wolves** (Matthew 10:16–23)

**Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. (10:16–23)**

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 382–409.

As part of their training toward finally being sent on their own after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the twelve needed to have an idea of the obstacles they would face. As noted in the previous chapter, some of the specifics Jesus taught in Matthew 10:5–42 applied only to the apostles; yet in principle they apply to His witnesses in every generation.

In a similar way, some of the instruction applied only to the brief mission on which Jesus now sent the twelve out two by two (Mark 6:7), although the underlying ministry precepts applied to their work even after the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven and will continue to apply to all His faithful servants throughout the church age and even into the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). Ministry built on divine precepts will not end “until the Son of Man comes” (10:23), the eschatological term Matthew uses to represent the return of Christ to establish His millennial kingdom.

THERE IS A TELESCOPING SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PASSAGE. BEGINNING WITH THE LIMITED, DISPENSATIONAL PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM TO “THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL” (VV. 6–7) DURING THIS PARTICULAR MISSION AND UNTIL PENTECOST, THERE IS A SWEEP THROUGH THE ENTIRE FUTURE OF CHRIST’S CHURCH—FROM HIS FIRST COMING TO HIS SECOND. WITH HIS OMNISCIENT PROPHETIC EYE, JESUS PICTURES THE TWELVE IN THEIR FULL MISSION, AND THEN HE PICTURES ALL THOSE WHO WOULD CONTINUE TO REPRESENT HIM THROUGHOUT REDEMPTIVE HISTORY, INCLUDING THOSE WHO WILL SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE DURING THE HOLOCAUST IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

That sort of telescopic prophecy is seen in numerous Old Testament passages, in which a prediction had both immediate and future significance and fulfillment. For example, within three verses, Micah spoke of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem at His first coming and of His ruling Israel and the

entire earth at His second coming (Mic. 5:2–4). Yet in that passage the two comings seem to be blended into one.

Apart from understanding Jesus' use of this telescopic (both/and) method, Matthew 10:5–42 cannot be sensibly interpreted.

The apostles did not raise the dead (see v. 8) during this brief mission in Galilee nor at any other time during Jesus' own earthly ministry. Nor did they themselves experience direct persecution or suffering (see vv. 16–23) until after Pentecost.

In **Matthew 10:16–23** Jesus first gives **an analogy** of believers and their opponents (v. 16a) and dual figures illustrating the attitudes they should have as they face those opponents (16b). He then mentions the two primary areas from which direct **attack** from persecutors will come (vv. 17–18) and promises God's equally direct **provision** for it (vv. 19–20). Finally, He mentions the two primary areas of indirect **attack** (vv. 21–22a) and tells His followers **how to respond when persecution comes** (v. 23).

## THE ANALOGY

**Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves;** (10:16a)

In saying, **Behold**, Jesus indicated His desire for the twelve to pay special attention to what He was about to say.

**HE HAD SPOKEN OF THE UNBELIEVING MULTITUDES AS BEING LIKE “SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD” (9:36),** and He had delegated miraculous powers to the twelve (10:8). Based on such input it could have seemed to the apostles that they were destined to be powerful wolves who would go out with invincibility to conquer the defenseless, unbelieving sheep of the world. But the Lord here made it clear that the world's “sheep” are not really defenseless and that the apostles' powers—divinely endowed and marvelous as they were—would not prevent them from suffering from the

hands of men. They, and the rest of His followers until He returns again, would be the real **sheep**. In that paradoxical truth

Jesus graphically pointed up the tensions between our vulnerability and our invincibility—between our weakness in ourselves and our strength in Him, between the power of hateful persecution and the power of loving submission, and between the worldly power of the flesh and the supernatural power of the Spirit.

**Sheep** are perhaps the most dependent, helpless, and stupid of all domesticated animals. They are as often panicked by harmless things as by those that are dangerous. And when real danger does come, they have no natural defense except running, and they are not very good at that.

In ***A Shepherd Looks at the Twenty-third Psalm***, Philip Keller gives many insights from his long experience as a shepherd in Canada. He points out that because sheep are so indiscriminate in their choice of vegetation to eat, it is necessary to carefully protect them from eating poisonous weeds. Because they are highly vulnerable to weather extremes and to infections and disease, they must be regularly and individually checked for dangerous symptoms, for cuts and abrasions, and for insects and parasites that can harm them. Flies buzzing around their eyes and ears have been known to so irritate and frighten sheep that they beat their heads against trees or rocks until they are dead. Sometimes flies will lay eggs in a sheep's eyes and ultimately cause blindness. In trying to escape real or imagined danger, sheep will sometimes panic into a blind stampede, and pregnant ewes will lose their lambs from the running and sometimes even their own lives from utter exhaustion.

But the sheep's greatest enemy is predators, the worst of which in Palestine and in many other parts of the world has always been **wolves**. People in Palestine understood the nature of sheep and the danger of wolves. They knew how difficult the

task of the shepherd was simply to keep his sheep alive, much less healthy and contented.

Most shepherds did not themselves own the flocks but tended them on behalf of the owners. When a sheep was killed, the shepherd was required to bring back a piece of its torn flesh or some other part of its body to prove it had indeed been killed by a wild animal rather than stolen by a thief or perhaps sold by a dishonest shepherd.

Jesus clearly identifies the **sheep** as **you**, that is, His disciples—the twelve and, by extension, all of His disciples yet to come.

**THE NORMAL DANGER FOR SHEEP IS THAT WOLVES COME IN AMONG *THEM*. BUT HERE JESUS TOLD THE TWELVE, I SEND YOU OUT AS SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES.**

**HE CALLED THEM TO GO INTO THE WOLVES' OWN TERRITORY, TO WALK INTO** the very maw of their enemies. Jesus is the perfect Good Shepherd, who loves His sheep with a divine love, who intimately knows them and is known by them, and who lays down His life for them (John 10:11–15). But in the figure of the **sheep** and **wolves**, Jesus gave a graphic illustration of the rejection and persecution by a God-hating world they would face because of Him. So, before the twelve went out into their first brief and relatively undemanding service for the Lord, He set before them the cost of discipleship. Just as He did not escape opposition and persecution, neither would they (cf. John 15:18–27; 16:33).

The world will continue to make raids on the church just as wolves make raids on flocks of sheep. “I know that after my departure,” Paul said, “savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). In his Romans letter he spoke of believers being looked on by the world as “sheep to be slaughtered” (8:36). Jesus had already warned His followers of “the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15).

IT IS CONSISTENT WITH THEIR PREDATORY NATURE FOR WOLVES TO COME INTO A FLOCK IN THE FIELD AND EVEN INTO THE SHEEPFOLD TO ATTACK, MUTILATE, AND DEVOUR THE SHEEP. BUT IT IS *NOT* NATURAL OR CONSISTENT WITH THEIR NATURE FOR SHEEP TO VOLUNTARILY WALK INTO THE WOLVES' OWN DEN.

*And it is unnatural for a shepherd to send his sheep into such certain peril. Yet that is where Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sends His disciples—into the hostile world of ungodly souls, because that is where they can serve Him best and be most effective in winning others to Him.*

The apostles, and to various extents every believer after them, would be sent out defenseless in themselves among evil, rapacious, vicious, God-hating mankind.

**WE DO NOT HEAR MUCH PREACHING TODAY OF SINNERS NEEDING TO COUNT THE COST OF SALVATION AND REPENTING OF SIN IN CONFESSING THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST, OR OF COMING TO HIM HUMBLY, DEVOID OF PRIDE AND SELF-TRUST, HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ENTERING THE NARROW GATE AND WALKING THE NARROW ROAD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. RARELY ARE CHRISTIANS CALLED TO TAKE UP THEIR CROSSES AND FOLLOW CHRIST IN MOVING OUT INTO THE WORLD AS SHEEP LED TO SLAUGHTER. THE POPULAR APPEAL IS TO EASE, COMFORT, RICHES, ADVANCEMENT, AND AMBITION—AND THE CHURCH OFTEN USES THAT KIND OF ENTICEMENT TO MOTIVATE UNBELIEVERS TO TRUST IN**

**CHRIST AND TO MOTIVATE BELIEVERS TO FOLLOW HIM. BUT JESUS MAKES NO SUCH OFFER. TO THE DISCIPLE HE PROMISES HARDSHIP, SUFFERING, AND DEATH.**

To present the gospel dishonestly and misleadingly is to be unfaithful to the Lord and to those to whom we present it. Because of false promises, many unredeemed people remain on the broad road that leads to destruction while being under the delusion they are on the road to life.

**Many believers are confirmed in spiritual mediocrity and unfruitfulness, thinking their health, wealth, and material success is the certain mark of divine approval. Still other believers are disillusioned and embittered because their lives of obedience, faithfulness, and sacrifice for Christ have not been materially rewarded.**

After the siege of Rome in 1849, Garibaldi said to his soldiers, "Men, all our efforts against superior forces have been unavailing. I have nothing to offer you but hunger and thirst, hardship and death. But I call on all who love their country to join with me." After the Allies were forced to evacuate Dunkirk in 1940, Churchill said to his fellow Englishmen, "All I can offer you is blood, sweat, and tears."

If those human leaders refused to send out their fellow countrymen to war under false pretenses, how much less would the divine Son of God!

**JESUS DOES NOT SEND OUT HIS FOLLOWERS WITHOUT WARNING ABOUT THE DEMANDS AND DANGERS OF DISCIPLESHIP.**

Nor did His apostles mislead the early church about what belonging to Christ would cost. As he wrote to encourage and strengthen Timothy, his son in the faith, Paul also assured him that

***“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”***  
(2 Tim. 3:12).

Godly lives are not marked by continual suffering and hardship inflicted on them by the unbelieving world. Neither the life of Jesus nor the lives of the apostles were characterized by uninterrupted hardship and persecution. But faithfulness to God guarantees that at some times and to some degree Satan and his world system will exact a price for it.

## THE ATTITUDE

**therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.** (10:16b)

In Egyptian hieroglyphics, as well as in much ancient lore, **serpents symbolize wisdom**. They were considered to be **shrewd**, smart, cunning, cautious. In that characteristic, at least, Christians are to emulate **serpents**.

Paul advises believers, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (**Col. 4:5**). Servants of the Lord are to be **shrewd** and cunning in dealing with the unbelieving world around them.

The basic idea is that of saying the right thing at the right time and place, of having a sense of **propriety and appropriateness, and of trying to discover the best means to achieve the highest goal**. It is neither wise nor loving to be needlessly

accusatory or inflammatory. When the Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus into either defending or condemning the Roman government by asking Him about paying taxes to Caesar, He did not take the occasion to vilify Caesar or the Roman government—vile, debauched, unjust, and ungodly as they were. Nor did He condone their wickedness. He replied simply, **“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s”** (Matt. 22:21).

It is neither brave nor wise, and neither spiritual nor loving, to needlessly incite anger or court trouble.

As the most harmless and gentle of birds, **doves represent being pure, or innocent, another characteristic of the faithful disciple of Christ.** Being true to God’s Word and uncompromising in proclaiming the gospel does not require, and should never include, being abrasive, coarse, inconsiderate, belligerent, blatant, or blunt.

Wisdom and innocence, cunning and gentleness, are handmaids of discretion.

No apostle was more uncompromising of the gospel than Paul; yet he declared,

***I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.***

And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.

(1 Cor. 9:19–22)

**Innocence involves more than simply avoiding negative attitudes and approaches. It also involves the positive attribute of purity.** Godly wisdom has no part in anything that is impure, deceitful, or defiling.

Innocence is always the ally of truth  
and righteousness.

**NOTHING UNTRUTHFUL OR UNETHICAL CAN  
ENHANCE THE GOSPEL OR MAKE ITS  
WITNESS MORE EFFECTIVE.**

Paul assured the Thessalonian believers that his preaching and teaching of the gospel did “not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit” (1 Thess. 2:3). Integrity and honesty are practical manifestations of truthfulness, without which an otherwise orthodox presentation of the gospel is distorted and weakened.

We are to be like our Lord Himself, our great “high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled” (Heb. 7:26). We are to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27). Jesus is again our model, because He “committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). In following our Lord’s example, “when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate” (1 Cor. 4:12–13).

When Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, the high priest Ananias ordered him to be struck in the mouth. In a moment of unguarded anger the apostle replied, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?” (Acts 23:3). When he was rebuked by some bystanders for reviling the high priest, Paul immediately apologized, saying, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people’ ” (v. 5).

What Paul had said to the high priest was perfectly true, and certainly understandable from a human point of view. But it was not appropriate, not only because it was said to the high priest but because it was said in self-defensive anger. It was not the wise and righteous thing to say.

## THE PERSECUTION

**But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.** (10:17–18)

Jesus proceeds to identify the “wolves” and then gives warnings about four areas in which they persecute believers— in religion, government, family, and society in general. Interspersed within the warnings are further instructions about the attitudes His disciples should have and the provision their heavenly Father supplies.

**THE WOLVES OF WHOM BELIEVERS ARE TO BEWARE ARE MEN. THE ULTIMATE ENEMIES AGAINST WHOM WE STRUGGLE ARE SATAN AND HIS DEMONIC HOSTS, THE NON FLESH-AND-BLOOD “RULERS, ... POWERS, ... WORLD FORCES OF THIS DARKNESS, [AND] SPIRITUAL FORCES OF**

**WICKEDNESS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES” (EPH. 6:12). BUT THE AGENTS OF THOSE SUPERNATURAL ENEMIES ARE HUMAN BEINGS. IT IS THROUGH MEN THAT SATAN OPPOSES AND PERSECUTES THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST. MEN ARE THE WOLVES WHO MALIGN, OPPRESS, IMPRISON, TORTURE, AND KILL GOD’S PEOPLE.**

**Beware** of these opponents, **Jesus says—be on guard, be watchful**, be perceptive. To be innocent is not to be naive.

*When well-meaning believers insist on putting the best face on every evil, they are not demonstrating love but foolishness and self-deception. Not to beat an unbeliever over the head with the vileness of his sin is one thing; to minimize his sin and his lostness apart from Christ is quite another. To love our enemies and not return evil for evil is one thing; to deny they are enemies is quite another.*

Jesus had already promised blessing for those who are “persecuted for the sake of righteousness” and who have insults and “all kinds of evil” spoken against them falsely for His sake (Matt. 5:10–11). Here He promises the persecution that ultimately brings the blessing.

**THE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES HAD NOT YET EXPERIENCED PERSECUTION OR EVEN OPPOSITION. RESISTANCE TO JESUS WAS NOT YET STRONG.** Some of the scribes had criticized Him for claiming to forgive sins (9:2–3), and some of the Pharisees complained to His disciples that their Teacher ate “with the tax-gatherers and sinners” (v. 11) and later accused Him of casting “out the demons by the ruler of the demons” (v. 34). But these criticisms did not hinder the ministry or pose any danger at that time.

Jesus' purpose in warning about persecution was not to frighten the apostles and make them suspicious of every human being who was not a believer. Their very mission was to convert the unsaved and win them to Christ's kingdom. But **they needed to be warned not to expect the world to receive the gospel and its messengers with open arms. Satan's world system, of whom every unbeliever is a part, is diametrically opposed to Christ, His people, and His kingdom. Satan will enlist the support of every unbeliever possible in his fight against God.**

**JESUS' PURPOSE IN THIS TEXT WAS TO CAUTION THE APOSTLES, AND ALL OF HIS PEOPLE, NOT TO BE SURPRISED WHEN THEY ARE CRITICIZED, OSTRACIZED, AND EVEN IMPRISONED AND PUT TO DEATH FOR HIS SAKE.**

## PERSECUTION BY RELIGION

**for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; (10:17b)**

The first source of persecution is religion, to which both **courts** and **synagogues** refer. Even under pagan rulers, the Jews were often allowed to settle most disputes among themselves, including many civil issues. For this purpose they had developed a detailed system of **courts** in which various cases were adjudicated. Every Jewish village and town, as well as every Jewish settlement of any size in Gentile countries, had a synagogue, which simply means a gathering place or a congregation.

Jews would try, convict, and punish (**scourge**) fellow Jews in their own religious **courts**, which were a part of their **synagogues**. A Jew accused of breaking the Mosaic law or a rabbinic tradition would be brought before a tribunal of judges, who decided the verdict, determined the sentence, and meted out punishment, which was often by scourging.

In New Testament times the **scourge** usually consisted of thirty-nine lashes with a whip, one less than the maximum of forty stripes allowed by Mosaic law (Deut. 25:3). One judge would call out the sentence, one would announce the punishment, one or more would do the scourging, and others of them would count the lashes. The Jewish writer Maimonides reported that appropriate Scripture passages were read and sometimes psalms were sung while punishment was being administered.

As the apostles preached and ministered in Christ's name, they could be sure of being brought before and punished by such Jewish courts. Before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was engaged in just such persecution. Many years later, as an apostle and a persecuted believer himself, he recounted his confession before God that "in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee" (Acts 22:19). By the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians he had been scourged by the Jews on five different occasions (2 Cor. 11:24), probably each time in a synagogue.

**William Barclay** comments that "the man with a message from God has to undergo the hatred and enmity of a fossilized orthodoxy."

## ***Jesus Himself was accused, tried, and convicted by religionists.***

Until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—and with it the destruction of the Temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices—virtually all persecution of Christians was by Jews. Though there remains personal hostility among Jews, after that time Jewish persecution of Christians virtually ceased, and it has never recurred to any significant degree since then.

From Revelation 11, however, we learn that the residual hostility against Christ will cause such persecution to resume during the last days. In the first half of the Tribulation, the beast from the abyss will be aligned with Israel; and in Jerusalem, “where their Lord was crucified,” he will kill the two witnesses God sends to preach on earth for twelve hundred and sixty days (vv. 3–8). It is likely that many unbelieving Jews will be party to the martyrdom of those two men and to the worldwide rejoicing over their deaths (v. 10).

**In the meanwhile, many other religious groups, some even bearing the name of Christ, will have oppressed, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and killed countless millions of true believers.**

During the lifetime of many of the apostles, other religion-related persecution had already begun. Paul was bitterly opposed in Ephesus because the spread of the gospel there had severely cut into the sale of pagan idols, which were the major source of income for the local silversmiths (see Acts 19:24–29). A letter written by Pliny, a first-century Roman governor of Bithynia, indicates he took severe steps to check the rapid growth of Christianity because it threatened the commercial interests of selling idols and sacrificial animals from which pagan temples derived most of their income.

The intimidation, vandalizing, and murder of modern missionaries in primitive societies has, almost without exception, been carried out or instigated by witch doctors, shamans, or other such religious leaders. And the greatest restrictions on Christian ministry and worship outside the atheistic communist world is in Muslim countries.

Religious persecution of believers has frequently been from within Christendom itself. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that “after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will

arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29).

*The final great persecution of God’s people will be by the worldwide religious system called “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth,” who will become “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (Rev. 17:5–6).*

All false religious systems had their beginnings at Babel, when rebellious mankind determined to storm heaven and establish its own Satan-inspired substitute for the way of God. Man’s religions have always opposed and sought to destroy God’s truth; and one day they will culminate in an incredibly powerful ecumenical world religion that will relentlessly and mercilessly oppose the gospel of Christ and persecute His people.

## PERSECUTION BY GOVERNMENT

and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. (10:18)

Persecution will also come from government. **Governors** were Roman procurators, such as were Pilate, Felix, and Festus, but they represent any governmental office or body below the national level. **Kings** (such as the two Agrippas, Herod Antipas, and other monarchs mentioned in the New Testament) represent heads of state.

**HERE JESUS EXPLAINS WHY THE WOLVES ARE SO VICIOUS WITH THE LORD’S SHEEP. IT IS NOT BECAUSE OF THE SHEEP THEMSELVES BUT BECAUSE**

**OF THEIR SHEPHERD. IT IS FOR MY SAKE, JESUS SAID, THAT HIS DISCIPLES WOULD SUFFER ABUSE AND PERSECUTION.**

The world hates Christians  
because the world hates Christ.

Every person who identifies himself with Christ through salvation becomes a potential target of Satan and his evil forces, including evil men. That it is Christ and not Christians themselves that the world opposes is seen in the fact the more Christ is manifest in us, the more we will be attacked.

Conversely, WHEN WE DO NOT MANIFEST CHRIST, WE DO NOT INCITE THE WORLD'S WRATH. THE CHRISTIAN WHO MIMICS THE WORLD, OR SIMPLY KEEPS HIS FAITH TO HIMSELF, IS IN LITTLE DANGER FROM THE WORLD, BECAUSE HE MANIFESTS LITTLE OF HIS LORD'S NATURE. THE WORLD ATTACKS US ONLY WHEN IT SEES CHRIST IN US.

Jesus affirmed such reality when He said,

*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

*But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. (John 15:18–21)*

*The stripes, lacerations, bruises, and scars on Paul's body were the "brand-marks of Jesus!"*  
(Galatians 6:17)

They were made on his body, but they were intended for his Lord.

**Paul's persecutors did not despise him because of who he was but because Christ worked so powerfully through him.**

When they eventually took Paul's life, they took it because his life was Christ's life.

Because the church is Christ's Body, it is faithful believers in the church who, like Paul, fill up "Christ's afflictions" (Col. 1:24). It is for that reason that Paul longed for the privilege of sharing in "the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:10). "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed," Peter says, "because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Pet. 4:14). It is the "Spirit of glory and of God" in the believer's life that the world hates and seeks to destroy.

# WHEN GOD'S KINGDOM IS THRIVING, SATAN CAUSES HIS PEOPLE TO REACT AGAINST IT IN PROPORTION TO ITS SUCCESS.

Paul himself had been used of Satan to persecute the church. Under his former name of Saul, he was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” He even asked for letters from the high priest “to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1–2).

When the Lord intercepted Saul on his way to Damascus to carry out his wicked plan, His first words to him were, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” and when Saul asked who was speaking to him, the Lord replied, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (vv. 4–5).

**SAUL HAD NOT SEEN JESUS DURING HIS  
EARTHLY MINISTRY, AND JESUS WAS NOW IN  
HEAVEN; YET SAUL WAS PERSECUTING JESUS.**

*Although the physical objects of the persecution were Christians (those “belonging to the Way”), the spiritual object was Christ Himself.*

Jesus' accusation made a deep impression on Paul, and when he testified before the mob in Jerusalem who demanded his arrest and eventually his execution, he quoted the words spoken to him by the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 22:7). He quoted the same words when he testified before King Agrippa, declaring that he had not been simply a persecutor of Christians but a persecutor of Christ (26:14).

Every antagonistic and injurious unbeliever, no matter how unconsciously, persecutes Christ through His people. Jesus declared unequivocally that ***“he who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters”*** (Matt. 12:30).

The phrase **as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles** is not easy to interpret. It could mean that persecuted believers are a living rebuke against their persecutors, a **testimony against them** and all the unbelieving **Gentiles** (pagans). Others take it to mean a **testimony to Christ** that persecuted believers make as His witnesses. The two interpretations are not incompatible, and both seem to be legitimate.

In either case, governments at various levels and to various degrees have been involved in persecution of believers throughout the history of the church. Only a few years after Pentecost, Herod Agrippa I “laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also” (Acts 12:1–3). Herod’s motivation, even in pleasing the Jews, was not religious but political and personal.

As Christianity began to spread throughout the empire, **ROME BECAME ESPECIALLY FEARFUL OF ITS SLAVES. BECAUSE OF THEIR GREAT NUMBERS (PERHAPS AS MANY AS 60 MILLION) SLAVES HAD LONG POSED THE THREAT OF REBELLION. THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO MARRY FREE CITIZENS, EVEN FREE MEN IN THE LOWEST LEVEL OF SOCIETY, BECAUSE SLAVES WERE CONSIDERED LESS THAN PERSONS. BUT WHEN SLAVES AND FREE ROMANS ALIKE BECAME CHRISTIANS, THEY DISCOVERED THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY BARRIER BETWEEN THEM, THAT THEY WERE EQUAL IN CHRIST. CHRISTIANITY THEREFORE CAME TO BE LOOKED ON AS A THREAT TO THE ENTIRE ROMAN SOCIAL SYSTEM AND ECONOMY, AND CONSEQUENTLY FALSE CHARGES WERE REPEATEDLY MADE AGAINST CHRISTIANS.** They were accused of cannibalism because they claimed to eat Christ’s body and drink His blood during the Lord’s Supper. They were accused of immorality in their love feasts and of promoting revolution by preaching about Christ’s return to establish His earthly kingdom. Many were martyred.

Throughout church history, various governments have been involved in persecuting the church, sometimes for purely political reasons and sometimes as an enforcer of state-recognized religion. During modern times, communist governments alone have slaughtered millions of Christians and persecuted and imprisoned countless millions more. Because atheism is a central tenet of Communism, it has always sought to suppress and eliminate religion, especially Christianity.

In the end times persecution of the saints will reach its climax, both by religion and by government, and will apparently be wielded as one great powerful arm of the antichrist.

The beast that will come “up out of the sea” will shout “blasphemies against God” and “will make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him” (Rev. 13:1, 13:6–7).

Although government is established by God to preserve social order, it has also become an instrument of Satan to promote his own work and to oppose the Lord's.

## Government is ordained by God but manipulated by Satan...

...and Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel all report demonic forces behind governments that were especially wicked. **When its citizens turn away from the Lord and His standards, even the freest and most democratic of governments, including that of our own United States, will eventually inhibit the free expression and practice of the Christian faith in hostility to Christ and His Word.**

### THE PROVISION

**But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.** (10:19–20)

To be maligned, persecuted, arrested, and beaten is traumatic, and while that is being experienced it is extremely difficult not to **become anxious**. When we are charged with a

wrongdoing, the natural reaction is to **speak** out in our own defense, to convince our accusers of our innocence.

Paul admonishes us to be at all times *“anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God”* (Phil. 4:6). But in the special circumstance of being brought before a religious or civil court we have the additional promise that **it shall be given [us] in that hour what [we] are to speak**.

## Those who suffer for Christ will be defended by Christ.

Many of the most memorable and powerful testimonies of the great martyrs were uttered just before they were put to death. God gave them a special presence of mind and clarity of thought to present a testimony more powerful than they would otherwise have been able to give.

For the apostles, that promise included the added provision of divine inspiration. When Paul, for example, gave testimony while he was on trial, he spoke the Word of God. **For it is not you who speak**, Jesus assured the apostles, **but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you**.

The well-known **commentator R. C. H. Lenski writes**,

Without previous thinking, planning, imagining, at the time of their trials in court, the Apostles will receive directly from God just what to utter. It will come into their minds just as it is needed, and thus they will utter it aloud.... The apostles, indeed, make utterance, and yet they do not, for their act is due to the Holy Spirit, so that most properly he is the one who does his uttering. Everything that is mechanical, magical, unpsychological is shut out.... The apostles will not be like the demoniacs, their organs of speech and their very wills being violated by a demon. Absolutely the contrary: mind, heart, will operate freely, consciously, in joyful, trustful dependence on the Spirit's giving, who enables them to find just what to say and how to say it down to the last word, with no mistake or even a wrong word due to faulty memory or disturbed emotions occurring. This, of course, is **Inspiration, Verbal Inspiration**. (*The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964], p. 402)

## THE HATRED

Persecution of believers is also expressed through the hatred of families who betray their own members and through the hatred of society in general.

### BY FAMILY

**And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. (10:21)**

Believers are promised that they may even be persecuted by their own families. During this same time of instruction, Jesus said, “For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law” Then, quoting Micah 7:6, He warned that “a man’s enemies will be the members of his household” (Matt. 10:35–36). A year or so later, as He taught about the Tribulation, Jesus repeated the same warning (Mark 13:12).

During Roman persecutions of the second and third centuries an untold number of Christians were betrayed to civil authorities by a **brother** or **father** or **child**. That tragic practice has been repeated many times, and it is not unknown even in our own day.

In certain religious cultures a funeral service is held for a family member who becomes a Christian, because in the eyes of his relatives he is no longer alive. In some instances the converted member has been poisoned to death. Someone has observed that only two things are stronger than natural love; one is born of hell and one is born of heaven.

# STRONGER THAN NATURAL LOVE ARE THE LOVE THAT IS OF GOD AND THE HATRED THAT IS OF SATAN.

Speaking of the end times, perhaps the kingdom age, Zechariah prophesied: *“And it will come about that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the Lord,’ and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies”* (Zech. 13:3). It may be that one day believing parents will kill their children who are false prophets.

## **BY SOCIETY**

**And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.** (10:22)

All is obviously not an absolute term in this context. Believers will not be hated by every single unbeliever on earth. The idea is that of all people in general, society as a whole. As verified by the last two thousand years, believers find they are **hated by all** classes, races, and nationalities of mankind.

Some believers live lives of almost constant conflict with the world, while others seem to escape it entirely. Some Christians are not persecuted simply because their testimony is so weak it goes unnoticed by the world. **WHEN BIBLICAL DOCTRINE AND STANDARDS ARE COMPROMISED TO ACCOMMODATE FALLEN HUMAN NATURE, SOCIETY HAS LITTLE ARGUMENT WITH THAT KIND OF CHRISTIANITY AND WILL GIVE LITTLE OPPOSITION TO CHRISTIANS.**

But to confront the world as Paul did with the declaration that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness

of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18) is to guarantee society’s wrath against the gospel and those who preach it.

Because they were so uncompromising in proclaiming the gospel, Paul declared himself and his fellow apostles to be “men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, ... weak, ... without honor, ... both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless” (1 Cor. 4:9–11).

When a Roman general won a great victory, he would parade his captives through the streets in a grand triumphal procession, purposely making a spectacle of his conquered foes, especially of the military officers and the rulers. That is the sort of spectacle the ancient world figuratively made of the apostles.

In summary, false religion reacts against believers because it is generated by Satan. Government reacts against believers because it is under the control of the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world. Ungodly families and society react against believers because they cannot tolerate righteous people in their midst.

Endurance of persecution is the hallmark of genuine salvation:

***It is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.***

Endurance does not produce or protect salvation, which is totally the work of God’s grace. But endurance is *evidence* of salvation, proof that a person is truly redeemed and a child of God.

***God gives eternal life “to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality,”*** Paul says (Rom. 2:7).

The writer of ***Hebrews expresses the same truth in these words: “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end”*** (3:14).

We do not earn our salvation by endurance,  
but prove it.

Continuance is a verification of being a real Christian.

Theologians call this the perseverance of the saints. The following Scriptures also emphasize perseverance: Matthew 24:13; John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 15:1–2; Colossians 1:21–23; Hebrews 2:1–3; 4:14; 6:11–12; 10:39; 12:14; 2 Peter 1:10.

***Persecution quickly burns away chaff in the church. Those who have made only a superficial profession of Christ have no new nature to motivate them to suffer for Christ and no divine power to enable them to endure it if they wanted to. Nothing is more spiritually purifying and strengthening than persecution***  
(cf. James 1:12).

It is because God’s Word assures us that absolutely nothing can separate us from Christ that we can count on such unshakable endurance. ***“Who shall separate us from the love of***

*Christ?” Paul asks rhetorically. “Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” He then answers his own question. “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35, 37–39).*

## THE RESPONSE

**But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. (10:23)**

Persecution is never to be sought or endured for its own sake; nor should we intentionally bring it on ourselves, supposedly for Christ’s sake.

**WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO PROVOKE ANIMOSITY OR RIDICULE. AND CHRIST HERE URGES ESCAPING PERSECUTION WHEN DOING SO IS EXPEDIENT AND POSSIBLE. WE ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO STAY IN A PLACE OF OPPOSITION AND DANGER UNTIL WE ARE KILLED, OR EVEN IMPRISONED.**

***Whenever they persecute you in this city, Jesus says, flee to the next.***

That is the pattern Paul followed throughout his ministry (see Acts 12–14, 17).

When persecution became so severe in one place that he could no longer minister effectively, he left and went to another.

**PAUL WAS NOT AFRAID OF PERSECUTION, AND MANY TIMES HE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN BEFORE HE LEFT A CITY. AT LEAST ONCE HE WAS STONED AND LEFT FOR DEAD. BUT HE DID NOT TRY TO TEST THE LIMITS OF THE OPPOSITION.**

*He endured whatever ridicule, reviling, beatings, and imprisonment were necessary while he ministered. But he left a place when his effectiveness there ceased.*

That is the pattern that every faithful minister and missionary is to follow **until the Son of Man comes**. Even during the Great Tribulation, Christ's faithful 144,000 Jewish people will preach all over the world and keep moving from place to place as they are persecuted and afflicted.

Despite their many misunderstandings, shortcomings, failures, and boastings, the disciples knew that Jesus was their only resource, that without Him they could do nothing (John 15:5). They hung close to Him and huddled around Him whenever there were problems or difficulties. He continually turned nature into one grand parable of God's sovereignty, power, and love. Every field, mountain, tree, flower, animal, leaf, and threshing floor became a picture of spiritual truth. He not only taught them, but He cared for them, loved them, and provided for them. When they finally realized He was actually going to leave them, they panicked.

The Lord would indeed send the twelve out among wolves into dangers they could never have imagined while they were with Him. But just as He promised to send them out among wolves, He also promised to send His own Spirit to indwell, empower, and encourage them.

If the world persecuted the Master, it would certainly persecute His servants (John 15:20), and a time would soon come when those who killed His followers would actually think they were

“offering service to God” (16:2). It was therefore both advantageous and necessary that Jesus go away, in order that the Holy Spirit, the divine Helper and Comforter, could come to them (v. 7).

***“These things I have spoken to you,” Jesus told them, “that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (v. 33).<sup>2</sup>***

## 3860. paradidómi ►

### Lexical Summary

**paradidómi:** To deliver, to hand over, to betray, to entrust

**Original Word:** παραδίδομι

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** paradidómi

**Pronunciation:** pah-rah-DEE-doh-mee

**Phonetic Spelling:** (par-ad-id'-o-mee)

**KJV:** betray, bring forth, cast, commit, deliver (up), give (over, up), hazard, put in prison, recommend

**NASB:** delivered, betray, betrayed, betraying, handed, deliver, hand

**Word Origin:** [from [G3844 \(παρά - than\)](#) and [G1325 \(δίδομι - give\)](#)]

1. to surrender, i.e yield up, intrust, transmit

### Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

betray, bring forth

From [para](#) and [didomi](#); to surrender, i.e yield up, intrust, transmit -- betray, bring forth, cast, commit, deliver (up), give (over, up), hazard, put in prison, recommend.

see GREEK [para](#)

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 197–211.

see GREEK [didomi](#)

## HELPS Word-studies

**3860** *paradídōmi* (from [3844](#) /*pará*, "from close-beside" and [1325](#) /*dídōmi*, "give") – properly, to give (turn) over; "hand over from," i.e. to deliver over with a sense of close (personal) involvement.

## NAS Exhaustive Concordance

### Word Origin

from [para](#) and [didómi](#)

### Definition

to hand over, to give or deliver over, to betray

### NASB Translation

betray (17), betrayed (10), betraying (9), betrays (3), commended (1), committed (3), deliver (6), delivered (21), delivered over (1), delivering (3), entrusted (3), entrusting (1), gave (4), gave...over (3), given...over (1), hand (6), handed (9), handed...over (1), handed down (4), handed over (4), hands (1), permits (1), put (1), putting (1), risked (1), surrender (1), taken into custody (2), turn...over (1).

## Thayer's Greek Lexicon

### STRONGS NT 3860: παραίδωμι

**παραίδωμι**, subjunctive 3 person singular **παραιδῶ** ([1 Corinthians 15:24](#) (L marginal reading Tr marginal reading WH, the Sinaiticus manuscript, etc.)) and **παραιδῶμι** (ibid. L text T Tr text; cf. Buttman, 46 (40) (and **δίδωμι**, at the beginning)); imperfect 3 person singular **παραιδίδου** ([Acts 8:3](#); [1 Peter 2:23](#)), plural **παραιδίδουν** ([Acts 16:4](#) R G; ) and **παραιδίδουσιν** ([Acts 16:4](#) L T Tr WH; cf. Winers Grammar, § 14, 1 c.; Buttman, 45 (39)); future **παραιδώσω**; 1 aorist **παραιδῶκα**; 2 aorist **παραιδῶν**, subjunctive 3 person singular **παραιδῶ** and several times **παραιδῶι** (so L T Tr WH in [Mark 4:29](#); [Mark 14:10, 11](#); [John 13:2](#); see **δίδωμι**, at the beginning); perfect participle **παραιδεδῶκως** ([Acts 15:26](#)); pluperfect 3 person plural without augment **παραιδεδῶκεισαν** ([Mark 15:10](#); Winers Grammar, § 12, 9; (Buttman, 33 (29); Tdf. Proleg., p. 120f)); passive, present **παραιδίδομαι**; imperfect 3 person singular **παραιδίδετο** ([1 Corinthians 11:23](#) L T Tr WH for R G **παραιδίδοτο**, see **ἀποδίδωμι**); perfect 3 person singular **παραιδέδοται** ([Luke 4:6](#)), participle **παραιδεδόμενος**, [Acts 14:26](#); 1 aorist **παραιδόθην**; 1 future **παραιδοθήσομαι**; from Pindar and Herodotus down; the Sept. mostly for **ἵδωμι**; **to give over**;

1. properly, **to give into the hands** (of another).

**2. to give over into (one's) power or use:** **τίνι τί**, to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, manage, [Matthew 11:27](#); [Luke 4:6](#) (cf. Winer's Grammar, 271 (254)); [Luke 10:22](#); **τά ὑπάρχοντα, τάλαντα**, [Matthew 25:14, 20, 22](#); **τήν βασιλείαν**, [1 Corinthians 15:24](#); **τό πνεῦμα** namely, **τῷ Θεῷ**, [John 19:30](#); **τό σῶμα, ἵνα** etc., to be burned, [1 Corinthians 13:3](#); **τινα**, to deliver one up to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death (often thus in secular authors): **τινα**, absolutely, so that to be put in prison must be supplied, [Matthew 4:12](#); [Mark 1:14](#); **τηρουμένους**, who are kept, [2 Peter 2:4](#) (G T Tr WH; but R **τετηρημένους**, L **κολαζομένους τηρεῖν**); to be put to death (cf. German dahingeben), [Romans 4:25](#); with the addition of **ὑπέρ τίνος**, for one's salvation, [Romans 8:32](#); **τινα τίνι**, [Matthew 5:25](#); [Matthew 18:34](#); [Matthew 20:18](#); [Matthew 27:2](#); [Mark 15:1](#); [Luke 12:58](#); [Luke 20:20](#); [John 18:30, 35](#); [John 19:11](#) etc.; [Acts 27:1](#); [Acts 28:16](#) Rec.; **τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν**, to do their pleasure with [Luke 23:25](#); **τινα τίνι**, followed by **ἵνα**, [John 19:16](#); with an infinitive of purpose, **φυλάσσειν αὐτόν**, to guard him, [Acts 12:4](#); without the dative, [Matthew 10:19](#); [Matthew 24:10](#); [Matthew 27:18](#); [Mark 13:11](#); [Mark 15:10](#); [Acts 3:13](#); followed by **ἵνα**, [Matthew 27:26](#); [Mark 15:15](#); **τινα εἰς τό σταυρωθῆναι**, [Matthew 26:2](#) (**σταυροῦ θανάτω**, Ev. Nicod. c. 26); **εἰς χεῖρας τίνος**, i. e. into one's power, [Matthew 17:22](#); [Matthew 26:45](#); [Mark 9:31](#); [Mark 14:41](#); [Luke 9:44](#); [Luke 24:7](#); [Acts 21:11](#); [Acts 28:17](#) ([Jeremiah 33:24](#) ()); **εἰς συνέδρια**, to councils (see **συνέδριον**, 2 b.) (**παραδιδόναι** involving also the idea of conducting), [Matthew 10:17](#); [Mark 13:9](#); **εἰς συναγωγάς**, [Luke 21:12](#); **εἰς θλίψιν**, [Matthew 24:9](#); **εἰς φυλακήν**, [Acts 8:3](#); **εἰς φυλακάς**, [Acts 22:4](#); **εἰς θάνατον**, [Matthew 10:21](#); [Mark 13:12](#); [2 Corinthians 4:11](#); **εἰς κρίμα θανάτου**, [Luke 24:20](#); **τόν σάρκα εἰς καταφθοράν**, of Christ undergoing death, the Epistle of Barnabas 5, 1 [ET]; **παραδιδόναι ἑαυτόν ὑπέρ τίνος**, to give oneself up for, give oneself to death for, to undergo death for (the salvation of) one, [Galatians 2:20](#); [Ephesians 5:25](#); with the addition of **τῷ Θεῷ** and a predicate accusative, [Ephesians 5:2](#); **τήν ψυχὴν ἑαυτοῦ ὑπέρ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ**, to jeopard life to magnify and make known the name of Jesus Christ, [Acts 15:26](#).  
 Metaphorically, expressions: **τινα τῷ Σατανᾷ**, to deliver one into the power of Satan to be harassed and tormented with evils, [1 Timothy 1:20](#); with the addition of **εἰς ὄλεθρον σαρκός** (see **ὄλεθρος**), [1 Corinthians 5:5](#) (the phrase seems to have originated from the Jewish formulas of excommunication (yet see Meyer (edited by Heinrici) at the passage (cf. B. D., under the word, Hymenaeus II., Excommunication II.)), because a person banished from the theocratic assembly was regarded as deprived of the protection of God and delivered up to the power of the devil). **τινα εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν**, to cause one to become unclean. [Romans 1:24](#); cf. Fritzsche, Rückert, and others at the passage (in this example and several that follow A. V. renders **to give up**); **εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας**, to make one a slave of vile passions, [Romans 1:26](#); **εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν**, to cause one to follow his own corrupt mind —

followed by an infinitive of purpose (or exegetic infinitive (Meyer)), [Romans 1:28](#); [ἑαυτὸν τῇ ἀσέλγεια](#), to make oneself the slave of lasciviousness, [Ephesians 4:19](#); [τινα λατρεύειν](#), to cause one to worship, [Acts 7:42](#). **to deliver up treacherously**, i. e. by betrayal to cause one to be taken: [τινα τίνι](#), of Judas betraying Jesus, [Matthew 26:15](#); [Mark 14:10](#); [Luke 22:4, 6](#); without the dative, [Matthew 26:16, 21, 23, 25](#); [Mark 14:11, 18](#); [Luke 22:21, 48](#); [John 6:64, 71](#); [John 12:4](#); in the passive, [Mark 14:21](#); [Luke 22:22](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23](#); present preposition [ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτόν](#), of him as plotting the betrayal (cf. Buttman, § 144, 11, 3): [Matthew 26:25, 46, 48](#); [Mark 14:42, 44](#); [John 13:11](#); [John 18:2, 5](#). **to deliver one to be taught, moulded**, etc.: [εἰς τί](#), in the passive, [Romans 6:17](#) (to be resolved thus, [ὑπηκούσατε ... τύπον](#), etc. [εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε](#) (Winer's Grammar, § 24, 2 b.)).

**3. equivalent to to commit, to commend:** [τινα τῇ χάριτι τοῦ Θεοῦ](#), in the passive, [Acts 14:26](#); [Acts 15:40](#); [παρεδίδου τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως](#), namely, [τά ἑαυτοῦ](#), his cause (Buttmann, 145 (127) note 2 (cf. Winer's Grammar, 590 (549))), [1 Peter 2:23](#).

**4. to deliver verbally:** commands, rites, [Mark 7:13](#); [Acts 6:14](#); [1 Corinthians 11:2](#); [2 Peter 2:21](#) (here in the passive); [πίστιν](#), the tenets (see [πίστις](#), 1 c. β.), in the passive, [Jude 1:3](#); [φυλάσσειν τά δόγματα](#), the decrees to keep, [Acts 16:4](#); **to deliver by narrating, to report**, i. e. to perpetuate the knowledge of events by narrating them, [Luke 1:2](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23](#); [1 Corinthians 15:3](#) (see examples from Greek authors in Passow (or Liddell and Scott), under the word, 4).

**5. to permit, allow:** absolutely [ὅταν παραδῶ](#) or [παραδοῖ ὁ καρπός](#), when the fruit will allow, i. e. when its ripeness permits, [Mark 4:29](#) (so [τῆς ὥρας παραδιδουσης](#), Polybius 22, 24, 9; for other examples see Passow, under the word, 3 (Liddell and Scott, under the word II.; others take the word in Mark, the passage cited intransitively, in a quasi-reflexive sense, **gives itself up, presents itself**, cf. Winer's Grammar, 251 (236); Buttman, 145 (127))).

## Topical Lexicon

### Meaning and Range of Usage

Strong's Greek number 3860 **describes the decisive act of handing someone or something over from one party to another.** In

Scripture the term spans

- criminal betrayal ([Matthew 26:16](#)),
- judicial extradition ([Acts 12:4](#)),
- authoritative transmission of teaching or tradition ([1 Corinthians 11:2](#)),

- divine surrender for redemptive purposes ([Romans 8:32](#)),
- and the solemn abandonment of the impenitent to their chosen course ([Romans 1:24-28](#)).

Whether used of a traitor, a judge, an apostle, or God Himself, the word always carries the sober idea that what is “delivered up” passes irrevocably into another’s control.

### Occurrences in the Gospels: The Betrayal of Jesus

The Evangelists employ the verb more than fifty times, centering on the passion narrative.

*Jesus repeatedly foretells that “the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men”* ([Matthew 17:22](#); [Mark 9:31](#); [Luke 9:44](#)).

**Judas embodies the dark side of the term: “And from that time he sought an opportunity to betray Him”** ([Matthew 26:16](#)).

Yet the same vocabulary frames the Father’s gracious purpose: “The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death” ([Matthew 20:18](#)).

The paradox exposes both human treachery and divine intentionality; what men mean for evil, God employs for salvation.

### The Passion Chronology

- Garden decision: “Rise, let us go. See, My betrayer is approaching” ([Matthew 26:46](#)).
- Kiss of treachery: “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” ([Luke 22:48](#)).
- Roman custody: “Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas... and delivered Jesus to be crucified” ([Mark 15:15](#)).
- Climactic surrender: “And having bowed His head, He yielded up His spirit” ([John 19:30](#)).

Each stage is marked by this verb, underscoring that the atonement unfolded under an unbroken chain of “deliverings” culminating in Christ’s voluntary self-surrender.

### Usage in Acts: Persecution and Mission

## After Pentecost, the word shifts from describing Christ's passion to describing the Church's persecution and missionary momentum.

- Hostile authorities “hand over” believers ([Acts 8:3](#); 12:4; 22:4).
- Yet the Church “commends” (hands over) missionaries to God’s grace: “From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed” ([Acts 14:26](#)).
- The verb also marks apostolic tradition: “As they traveled through the cities, they delivered to them the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem” ([Acts 16:4](#)).

Thus the same word that describes arrest also describes the entrusted gospel, showing how God turns opposition into opportunity.

### **Pauline Epistles: Apostolic Tradition and Divine Judgment**

**Paul uses the term with theological depth.**

#### **1. GOSPEL TRADITION**

- *“For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins”* ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)).
- Transmission safeguards the content and authority of apostolic teaching ([1 Corinthians 11:2, 23](#)).

#### **2. SELF-SACRIFICE OF CHRIST**

- *“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all”* ([Romans 8:32](#)).
- “Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God” ([Ephesians 5:2](#)).

#### **3. JUDICIAL ABANDONMENT**

- Threefold refrain: *“God gave them over”* ([Romans 1:24, 26, 28](#)) describes the moral spiral when sinners persistently resist grace.

#### **4. CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

- *“Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,*

*so that his spirit may be saved”* ([1 Corinthians 5:5](#)).

- A severe but redemptive measure mirroring God’s own judgments.

## General Epistles

Jude urges believers “to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Peter warns that it would have been better for false teachers “not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them” ([2 Peter 2:21](#)). In both cases the faith is depicted as a sacred deposit entrusted to the Church.

## Theological Implications:

### Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

The verb simultaneously protects two compatible truths:

- Human responsibility: Judas, Jewish leaders, and Pilate are guilty of delivering the righteous One.
- Divine sovereignty: the Father “delivered Him over” according to an eternal plan, and the Son willingly delivered Himself.

The same tension stands behind [Romans 1:24-28](#), where God’s judicial “handing over” ratifies human rebellion, and behind [1 Corinthians 5:5](#), where the church’s disciplinary handing over aims at eventual restoration.

## Practical Application for Ministry

1. Guard the deposit. Like Paul and Jude, pastors must faithfully transmit the once-delivered faith without alteration.
2. Trust divine overruling. Persecution may “hand over” believers to courts, but those courts cannot thwart Christ’s mission ([Matthew 10:17-20](#)).
3. Embrace sacrificial service. Christ’s self-giving sets the pattern for believers: “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).
4. Exercise restorative discipline. Handing an unrepentant member over to corrective consequences may become the means of ultimate salvation.

In every case Strong’s 3860 confronts the reader with the gravity of stewardship—of souls, of doctrine, and of destiny.

## Focus on v.23

EXPOSITORY (ENGLISH BIBLE)

### Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(23) **When they persecute you** The counsel is noteworthy as suggesting at least one form of the wisdom of the serpent. Men were not to imagine that they were “enduring to the end” when, in the eagerness of their zeal, they courted martyrdom; but were rather to avoid danger instead of courting it, and to utilise all opportunities for the continuance of their work. The effect of the command thus given may be traced in all the great persecutions under the Roman Empire, Polycarp and Cyprian furnishing, perhaps, the most conspicuous examples.

**Till the Son of man be come.**—The thought of another Coming than that of the days of His humiliation and of His work as a Prophet and a Healer, which had been implied before ([Matthew 7:21-23](#)), is now explicitly unfolded. The Son of Man should come, as Daniel had seen Him come ([Daniel 7:13](#)), in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to complete the triumph of His kingdom. It is more difficult to understand the connection of the words with the preceding limit of time, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel.” The natural result of such a promise was to lead the disciples to look forward to that coming as certain to be within the range of their own lifetime, and was the ground of the general expectation of its nearness which, beyond all doubt, pervaded the minds of men in the Apostolic age. Explanations have been given which point to the destruction of Jerusalem as being so far “a day of the Lord” as to justify its being taken as a type of the final Advent, and they receive at least a certain measure of support from the way in which the two events are brought into close connection in the great prophetic discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21. But the question meets us, and cannot be evaded, Were the two events thus brought together with a knowledge of the long interval by which they were in fact to be divided from each other, and if so, why was that knowledge kept from the disciples? Some reasons for that reticence lie on the surface. That sudden widening of the horizon of their vision would have been one of the things which they were not able to bear ([John 16:12](#)). In this, as in all else, their training as individual men was necessarily gradual, and the education of the Church which they founded was to be carried on, like that of mankind at large, through a long succession of centuries. The whole question will call for a fuller discussion in the Notes on Matthew 24. In the meantime it will be enough humbly to express my own personal conviction that what seems the boldest solution is also the truest and most reverential. The human thoughts of the Son of Man may not have travelled in this matter to the furthest bound of the mysterious horizon. He Himself told them of that day and that hour, that its time was known neither to the angels of heaven, nor even to the Son, but to the Father only ([Mark 13:32](#)).

### Benson Commentary

[Matthew 10:23](#). *But, &c.* — As if he had said, I do not say this with a view to encourage you to rush upon martyrdom before you have a plain and lawful call to it; on the other hand, it will rather be your duty to prolong your useful lives to the utmost limits you

lawfully may. Therefore, *when they persecute you in one city, flee to another* — And though this may contract the time of your abode in each, be not discouraged at that, which may, on the whole, be no inconvenience: for *ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel* — To preach the gospel in each of them, make what haste you will, *until the Son of man shall come* — To destroy their capital city, temple, and nation. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is often called *the coming of the Son of man*. See [Matthew 24:27](#); [Matthew 24:37](#); [Matthew 24:39](#); [Matthew 24:44](#); [Luke 18:5](#).

### **[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary](#)**

10:16-42 Our Lord warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were to avoid all things which gave advantage to their enemies, all meddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures. Christ foretold troubles, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise, but that they might confirm their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom. Thus Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost. Persecutors are worse than beasts, in that they prey upon those of their own kind. The strongest bonds of love and duty, have often been broken through from enmity against Christ. Sufferings from friends and relations are very grievous; nothing cuts more. It appears plainly, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. With these predictions of trouble, are counsels and comforts for a time of trial. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and they need the serpent's wisdom. Be ye harmless as doves. Not only, do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill-will. Prudent care there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing thought; let this care be cast upon God. The disciples of Christ must think more how to do well, than how to speak well. In case of great peril, the disciples of Christ may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. No sinful, unlawful means may be used to escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. The fear of man brings a snare, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be striven and prayed against. Tribulation, distress, and persecution cannot take away God's love to them, or theirs to him. Fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They must deliver their message publicly, for all are deeply concerned in the doctrine of the gospel. The whole counsel of God must be made known, Ac 20:27. Christ shows them why they should be of good cheer. Their sufferings witnessed against those who oppose his gospel. When God calls us to speak for him, we may depend on him to teach us what to say. A believing prospect of the end of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. They may be borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them. The strength shall be according to the day. And it is great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. See how the care of Providence extends to all creatures, even to the sparrows. This should silence all the fears of God's people; Ye are of more value than many sparrows. And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This denotes the account God takes and keeps of his people. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in

-serving him. That denial of Christ only is here meant which is persisted in, and that confession only can have the blessed recompense here promised, which is the real and constant language of faith and love. Religion is worth every thing; all who believe the truth of it, will come up to the price, and make every thing else yield to it. Christ will lead us through sufferings, to glory with him. Those are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life. Though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be ever so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted. Christ does not say that they deserve a reward; for we cannot merit any thing from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God. Let us boldly confess Christ, and show love to him in all things.

### **Barnes' Notes on the Bible**

When they persecute ... - The apostles were not permitted to "throw away" their lives. Where they could preserve them without denying their Lord, they were to do it. Yet all the commands of Christ, as well as their conduct, show that they were rather to lay down their lives than deny their Saviour. We are to preserve our lives by all proper means, but we are rather to die than save ourselves by doing anything wrong.

Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel ... - That is, in fleeing from persecutors from one city to another, you shall not have gone to every city in Judea until the end of the Jewish economy shall occur. See the notes at [Matthew 24:28-30](#). By "the coming of the Son of Man," that is, of "Christ," is probably meant the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about thirty years after this was spoken. The words are often used in this sense. See [Matthew 24:30](#); [Mark 13:26](#); [Luke 21:27](#), [Luke 21:32](#).

### **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**

23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another—"into the other." This, though applicable to all time, and exemplified by our Lord Himself once and again, had special reference to the brief opportunities which Israel was to have of "knowing the time of His visitations."

for verily I say unto you—what will startle you, but at the same time show you the solemnity of your mission, and the need of economizing the time for it.

Ye shall not have gone over—Ye shall in nowise have completed.

the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come—To understand this—as Lange and others do—in the first instance, of Christ's own peregrinations, as if He had said, "Waste not your time upon hostile places, for I Myself will be after you ere your work be over"—seems almost trifling. "The coming of the Son of man" has a fixed doctrinal sense, here referring immediately to the crisis of Israel's history as the visible kingdom of God, when Christ was to come and judge it; when "the wrath would come upon it to the uttermost"; and when, on the ruins of Jerusalem and the old economy, He would establish His own kingdom. This, in the uniform language of Scripture, is more immediately "the coming of the Son of man," "the day of vengeance of our God" (Mt 16:28; 24:27, 34; compare with

Heb 10:25; Jas 5:7-9)—but only as being such a lively anticipation of His second coming for vengeance and deliverance. So understood, it is parallel with Mt 24:14 (on which see).

Directions for the Service of Christ in Its Widest Sense (Mt 10:24-42).

### **Matthew Poole's Commentary**

Whether this text at all warrants ministers' flight in a time of persecution I doubt; it seemeth to be a special command given to the apostles, that they might have a time before the coming of Christ, here spoken of, to preach the gospel over all the cities of Israel. But that in some cases it is lawful to flee I do not at all doubt, though I do question whether it be to be warranted from this text. What those cases are is largely discoursed, particularly by Mr. Torshell. Generally it is said, wherever the glory of God, or the good of others, calls to us for such a flight. But what may be judged such cases is a more particular question. Augustine to Honoratus speaketh well in the case. Ministers ought not to flee rashly, nor out of cowardice, nor that they might live elsewhere lazily, nor when their flight will betray the church of God: not where the persecution is general; but where the persecution is particular, against some of them, and there will be enough left for the care of the church in their absence, and with the consent of the church, they may flee. But this is too large a case to be spoken to here; especially considering (as I said) that I do not think that any flight is to be justified from this text, the precept being particular for special reasons.

**Till the Son of man be come.** There is a wonderful variety of interpreters' senses of this text, founded upon the various comings of Christ mentioned in holy writ. He was already come in the flesh, so as it, speaking of a time to come, could not be meant of that: nor can it be understood of his second coming to judgment, for they have gone through the cities of Israel long ago. Christ is therefore said in Scripture to come, when he appeareth in some great work of providence, whether of judgment or mercy. This makes some interpret it of the destruction of Jerusalem; in which sense some think the coming of Christ is mentioned, [Matthew 24:1-51](#). Some, of the resurrection of Christ, from whence they say Christ's epocha commenced. Others understand it of the effusion of the Spirit in the day of Pentecost; this they ground on [John 14:17,18](#), where they think Christ's coming, promised [John 14:18](#), is the coming of the Spirit, promised [John 14:17](#). Undoubtedly, in the general, our Saviour means, till the time be accomplished when you must leave preaching to the Jews and go to the Gentiles, and my kingdom shall be further extended than it is at present; which dispensation of God may for aught I know be called the coming of Christ, being an eminent act of God's providence, by which Christ was more showed to the world, and his kingdom further extended.

### **Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible**

But when they persecute you in this city,.... Or any city into which they went, and preached the Gospel; and would not suffer them to go on in their work, they were not to desist, but to go elsewhere, where they might hope for a better reception, and a longer continuance, and so of doing more good:

flee ye into another; not so much for their own safety, though this, according to the circumstances of things, is lawful, but for the further spreading of the Gospel. The exhortation is not to take methods to avoid persecution, or to make an escape from it, but to perseverance under it: the sense is, they were not to be discouraged, and to leave off, because of persecution in one place, but to persist in the ministration of the Gospel, by carrying it to other cities; and it seems to be a spur to them to make haste, and fulfil their office of preaching the Gospel, in the land of Judea: nor need they fear going on too fast, lest they should have no places to preach in;

for verily I say unto you, this is a certain and indisputable truth not to be called in question, being strongly affirmed by truth itself,

ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, or "finished" them; that is, their tour through them, and their ministry, or the preaching of the Gospel in them,

till the son of man be come; which is not to be understood of his second coming to judgment, but either of his resurrection from the dead, when he was declared to be the Son of God, and when his glorification began; or of the pouring forth of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost, when his kingdom began more visibly to take place, and he was made, or manifested to be the Lord and Christ; or of his coming to take vengeance on his enemies, that would not have him to rule over them, and the persecutors of his ministers, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

### **Geneva Study Bible**

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have {i} gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

- (i) Bring to an end, that is, you will not have gone through all the cities of Israel and preached in them.

### **EXEGETICAL (ORIGINAL LANGUAGES)**

#### **Meyer's NT Commentary**

**Matthew 10:23.** Ταύτη and τὴν ἄλλην are to be understood δεικτικῶς. Jesus points with the finger in the direction of various towns. Your sphere is large enough to admit of your retreating before persecution in order to save others.

γάρ] A ground of encouragement for such perseverance.

οὐ μὴ τελέσητε, κ.τ.λ.] *You will not have completed your visits* to the towns of the people of Israel; *i.e.*, you will not have accomplished in all of them your mission, associated as it will be with such flights from town to town Comp. the analogous use of ἀνύειν (Raphel, Krebs, Loesner, on this passage), *explere*, in Tibull. i. 4. 69 (Heyne, *Obs.* p. 47); *consummare*, in Flor. i. 18. 1 (see Ducker on the passage). The

interpretation: *to bring to Christian perfection* (Maldonatus, Zeger, Jansen, following Hilary; Hofmann, *Weissag. u. Erfüll.* II. p. 267 f.), is an erroneous makeshift, by way of removing the second coming farther into the future. Observe that here, too, as in [Matthew 10:5](#), the apostolic ministry is still confined to Israel.

ἕως ἄν ἔλθῃ] *until the Son of man will have come, i.e.* the Messiah, such as He has been promised in Daniel's vision ([Matthew 8:20](#)), who will then put an end to your troubles, and receive you into the glory of His kingdom. Jesus means neither more nor less than His *second coming* (Matthew 24), which He announces even at this early stage, and as being so near, that [Matthew 24:14](#), and even [Matthew 26:28](#), are not to be reconciled with this view. Different elements of the tradition, which, in the course of experience, came to view the prospect as more remote,—a tradition, however, that was still the product of the existing γενεά ([Matthew 24:34](#), [Matthew 14:28](#)). The interpretations which explain away the final coming, content themselves, some with the idea of a vague *coming after* or *coming to their help* (Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euth. Zigabenus, Beza, Kuinoel; even Origen and Theodoret, Heracleon in Cramer's *Cat.* p. 78); others with the *coming through the Holy Spirit* (Calvin, Grotius, Calovius, Bleek), or with supposing that the, as yet too remote, *destruction of Jerusalem* is referred to (Michaelis, Schott, Glöckler, Ebrard, Gess); and others, again, explaining it allegorically of the *victory of Christ's cause* (Baumgarten-Crusius). On the prediction of the second coming itself, see on ch. 24.

### **Expositor's Greek Testament**

[Matthew 10:23](#). ὅταν δὲ: the thought takes a new comforting turn, much needed to reconcile disciples to the grim prospect. With courage and loyalty effort for self-preservation is quite compatible. Therefore, when they persecute here flee there.—ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, in *this* city, pointing to it, *this* standing for *one*.—φεύγετε, flee, very un-heroic apparently, but the bravest soldier, especially an old campaigner, will avail himself of cover when he can. εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν: the reading of [62] [63] is to be preferred to ἄλλην of the T.R., the idea being: flee not merely to another city numerically distinct, but to a city presumably different in spirit (*vide* [Matthew 6:24](#) and [Matthew 11:16](#)), where you may hope to receive better treatment. Thus the flight, from being a mere measure of self-preservation, is raised to the dignity of a policy of prudence in the interest of the cause. Why throw away life here among a hostile people when you may do good work elsewhere?—Ἀμὴν γὰρ: reason for the advice solemnly given; an important declaration, and a perplexing one for interpreters.—οὐ μὴ, have no fear lest, ye will certainly not have finished—τελέσητε. In what sense? "gone over" (A.V[64]) in their evangelising tour, or done the work of evangelising thoroughly? (ad fidei et evangelicae virtutis perfectionem—Hilary). The former is the more natural interpretation. And yet the connection of thought seems to demand a mental reference to the quality of the work done. Why tarry at one place as if you were under obligation to convert the whole population to the kingdom? The thing cannot be done. The two views may be combined thus: ye shall not have gone through the towns of Israel evangelising

them in even a superficial way, much less in a thorough-going manner. Weiss takes the word  $\tau\epsilon\lambda$ . as referring not to mission work but to flight = ye shall not have used all the cities as places of refuge, *i.e.*, there will always be some place to flee to. This is beneath the dignity of the situation, especially in view of what follows.— $\epsilon\omega\varsigma \epsilon\lambda\theta\eta \acute{o} \upsilon\iota\acute{o}\varsigma \tau. \acute{\alpha}$ . Here again is the peculiar title *Song of Solomon of Man*: impersonal, but used presumably as a synonym for “I”. What does it mean in this connection? And what is the coming referred to? The latter question can be best answered at a later stage. It has been suggested that the title Son of Man is here used by Christ in opposition to the title *Song of Solomon of David*. The meaning of [Matthew 10:23](#) on that view is this: do not think it necessary to tarry at all hazards in one place. Your work anywhere and everywhere must be very imperfect. Even success will mean failure, for as soon as they have received the tidings of the kingdom they will attach wrong ideas to it, thinking of it as a national kingdom and of me as the “Son of David”. No thorough work can be done till the Son of *Man* has come, *i.e.*, till a universal Gospel for humanity has begun to be preached (Lutteroth). This is a fresh suggestion, not to be despised, on so obscure a subject. We are only feeling our way as to the meaning of some of Christ’s sayings. Meantime, all that we can be sure of is that Christ points to some event not far off that will put a period to the apostolic mission.

[62] Codex Sinaiticus (sæc. iv.), now at St. Petersburg, published in facsimile type by its discoverer, Tischendorf, in 1862.

[63] Codex Vaticanus (sæc. iv.), published in photographic facsimile in 1889 under the care of the Abbate Cozza-Luzi.

[64] Authorised Version.

### [Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#)

23. *when they persecute you*] Such words indicate that these “instructions” have a far wider range than the immediate mission of the Apostles. They are prophetic, bringing both warning and consolation to all ages of the Church.

*till the Son of man be come*] The passage in Luke 21, which is to a great extent parallel to this, treats of the destruction of Jerusalem; and no one who carefully weighs our Lord’s words can fail to see that in a real sense He came in the destruction of Jerusalem. That event was in truth the judgment of Christ falling on the unrepentant nation. In this sense the Gospel had not been preached to all the

cities of Israel before Christ came. But all these words point to a more distant future. The work of Christian missions is going on, and will still continue until Christ comes again to a final judgment.

### **Bengel's Gnomon**

**Matthew 10:23.** Τὴν ἄλλην—κἄν ἐκ ταύτης διώκωσιν ὑμᾶς φεύγετε εἰς ἑτέραν, *the other*[469]—*and if they persecute you from this city, flee ye into another*) This is the most ancient Latin reading,[470] and also that of Orige[471][472] contra Celsum (p. 51, Ed. Hoesch.[473]), where, instead of φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἄλλην” [as in E.M.], we find φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν· κἄν ἐν τῇ ἑτέρῃ δίωκωσι, πάλιν φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἄλλην.” *Flee ye into the other*;<sup>[474]</sup> *and if they persecute you in that other, flee ye again into the other.*<sup>[475]</sup> Francis Lucas<sup>[476]</sup> of Bruges quotes old Latin Codices in favour of that reading. Thence, too, the Anglo-Saxon version has—“*and thonne hi on thære eovv ehtath, fleoth on tha thryddan;*” i.e. “*and when they persecute you in that [city], flee to the third.*” Ambrose<sup>[477]</sup> also, in his treatise, *De Fugâ Seculi* (ch. 4), says, “But if they shall persecute you in one, flee ye into another.” And Juvenicus<sup>[478]</sup> renders the passage thus:—

[469] E. V. *another*.—(I. B.)

[470] The words κἄν—ἑτέραν are not found in E. M.—(I. B.)

[471] rigen (born about 186 A.D., died 253 A.D., a Greek father: two-thirds of the N. Test. are quoted in his writings). Ed. Vinc. Delarue, Paris. 1733, 1740, 1759.

[472] ORIGEN was born at Alexandria, in Egypt, about A.D. 185; and died at Tyre, about A.D. 254.—(I. B.)

[473] DAVID HOESCHELIUS, born at Augsburg 1556. He was a laborious and successful Editor. Among the authors he edited were Origen, Philo Judæus, Basil, and Photius. He died 1617.—(I. B.)

[474] τὴν ἑτέραν.—ἕτερος signifies originally, *other* in opposition to one, though it has also the force of *other* in opposition to *many*.—(I. B.)

[475] τὴν ἄλλην.—ἄλλος signifies originally, *other* in opposition to *many*, though it is used also to represent *other* in opposition to *one*. Here τὴν ἄλλην appears to have the force of *the former*.—(I. B.)

[476] FRANCIS LUCAS was born at Bruges in the sixteenth century. He studied under

Arius Montanus, and became a Doctor of Louvain, and Dean of the Church of St Omer. He was profoundly skilled in the Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee languages, and is considered a judicious critic. he died in 1619.—(I. B.)

[477] Born at Treves A.D. 340; consecrated, in 374, Bishop of Milan, where he died in 397. he was an eloquent preacher, and an able and voluminous writer.—(I. B.)

[478] C. AQUILINUS VETTIUS (al. VECTIUS, or VESTIUS) JUVENCUS, a Spanish priest of good family, who flourished in the fourth century. He wrote, besides other works, a history of our Lord in good hexameter verse, considered both poetical and faithful, and published it about 330.—(I. B.)

“Profugite e tectis quæ vos sectabitur urbis

Inde aliam, mox INDE ALIAM, conquirite sedem.”

“*Flee from the roofs of the city which persecutes you; thence seek another* and THEN AGAIN ANOTHER *abode*.” Thus Augustine; thus the Armenian Version. The Codex Cantabrigiensis, the Codices Colbertini 2467 and 3947, Parisiensis 6, and the Codex Stephani η (to which some add the Codex Gonvillianus), contain this passage in various forms of words. The variety of the Greek words[479] suggests the suspicion that this verse has been rendered from *Latin* into *Greek*: on the other hand, the antiquity and celebrity of the Latin text is proved by the very multitude and discrepancy of these Greek codices. The omission appears to have arisen from the carelessness so frequently manifested by transcribers, where similar words recur: the facility with which the mistake may occur, appears from the fact that Gelenius, in his Latin version of Orige[480], omits this very clause [which undoubtedly exists in the original]. Athanasius more than once substitutes ἐτέραν for ἄλλην, as is at present the case with the Codex Colbertinus, and from which you may conjecture, that another omission[481] might soon be made by other transcribers.

[479] Lachm. reads ἐτέραν, with Bd Orig. 1,295; 380; 3,473c; 709; cod. 4,398. But Tischend. ἄλλην, with Dabc Vulg. Origen 3,709, and Rec. Text. Lachm. adds in brackets, κἄν ἐν τῇ ἐτέρα διώκωσιν ὑμᾶς, φεύγετε δεῖς τὴν ἄλλην, with DL (ἐκ ταύτης ἐκδιώξωσιν—τ. ἐτέραν) ab Orig. 1,295b; 380a; Hil. 656. But Bc Vulg. and Rec. Text omit these words. Probably they come from a transcriber who fancied that φεύγετε εἰς τὴν ἐτέραν, sc. “*a second* city,” was incomplete without a clause, “And when they persecute you in that *second* city, flee into *another*, i.e. a *third* city.” To avoid the need for this, I believe the reading ἄλλην for ἐτέραν arose. The shorter is generally preferable to the longer reading, as it was the tendency of transcribers to insert all added matter, lest their copy should be incomplete.—ED.

[480] rigen (born about 186 A.D., died 253 A.D., a Greek father: two-thirds of the N. Test.

are quoted in his writings). Ed. Vinc. Delarue, Paris. 1733, 1740, 1759.

[481] "hiatus," *hiatus, gap*. See Author's Preface viii. 14, and App. Crit. Part I. § xxii., obs. xxvii., etc.—(I. B.)

Οὐ μὴ τελέσητε, *ye shall not finish*[482]) cf. **לל**,[483] in [2 Chronicles 31:1](#).—τὰς πόλεις, *the cities*) not to say, *villages*, of Israel.—See [Matthew 10:6](#). Our Lord tells them that there was no fear of their not having where to preach, and that they were not to remain long in one place, as they would have the opportunity of remaining longer in other places.—ἕως ἃν ἔλθῃ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, *until the Son of Man be come*) Concerning this *coming*, see [Matthew 10:7](#); [Matthew 11:1](#).[484]

[482] E. V. *Ye shall not have gone over*.—(I. B.)

[483] **לל**—(1) To be completed, finished.—GESENIUS.—(I. B.)

[484] To wit, there is here meant that very advent, whereby. through His full presence, beneficence, and preaching, the preparatory announcement of His ambassadors in those days was, as it were, completed and fulfilled by Him, whom it behoved to come, to proclaim the Gospel, and to see that it was proclaimed by others, [Matthew 11:3](#); [Matthew 11:5](#). In a similar manner, He commanded the Seventy disciples also to announce the approach of the divine kingdom, and followed up that announcement by His own very presence in those same places, [Luke 10:1](#); [Luke 10:9](#).—*Harm.*, p. 293.

### **Pulpit Commentary**

Verse 23. - Matthew only; but even this verse is not free from what appear to be reminiscences of the words recorded in [Matthew 24:14, 16](#)). *But when they persecute you in this city*. Act wisely (ver. 16); flee to another city; you will find work there. *Flee ye* (cf. [Matthew 23:34](#), and *supra*, ver. 17, note) *into another; into the next* (Revised Version); εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν. There are occasions when the duty is rather to spread the message than to seal it with death or to have one's lips closed by imprisonment. But only "he that is spiritual" ([1 Corinthians 2:15](#)) will be able to understand which course of action the special circumstances require. Our Lord's example ([Matthew 12:15](#)) was followed by Christians in the earliest ([Acts 8:1](#); [Acts 9:25, 30](#); [Acts 14:6](#); [Acts 17:10, 14](#)) and in later times (e.g. Polycarp, n.y. 155; Dionysius of Alexandria, A.D. 249-251; Cyprian, A.D. 250; Athanasius, A.D. 340). Codex Bezae and some Western authorities, including Tatian's 'Diatess.,' add, "And if out of this they persecute you, flee into another;" but this is a not unnatural gloss upon the true text. *For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over; through* (Revised Version); οὐ μὴ τετέσητε: literally, *hate completed*, like the harvest ([Ruth 2:23](#)). *The cities of Israel* (cf. ver. 6) *till the Son of man* ([Matthew 8:20](#), note) *be come*. The mere fact that there was no persecution of the kind just spoken of until after our Lord's death in itself refutes the opinion (found, perhaps, in Tatian's 'Diatess.,' "Donee venero ad yes;" *vide* Resch, 'Agrapha,' p. 270) that these words refer to his rejoining his disciples on their mission ([Matthew 11:1](#); cf. [Luke 10:1](#)). They may, perhaps, refer to his coming in the fall of Jerusalem, but rather look

forward to his complete return in his second advent, as apparently Agathangelus, in Resch, **loc. cit.** (cf. also p. 404), understands them. The cities of **Israel** are named because work among the Jews lay at the basis of the commission. If an exact fulfilment of the words is demanded, it is perhaps to be seen in the fact that there will be some Jews unconverted until the Lord's return. Matthew 10:23