

Matthew 10:16-23 – Avoiding the Unavoidable

Huntingdon Missionary Baptist Church – Sunday, February 25, 2024 PM

Context: Jesus just prayed for laborers to enter the white fields

- Three chapters of preaching; two chapters of miracles and signs
- Jesus has called the 12 Apostles and is instructing them to go out on a limited mission to Israel; to replicate His Message & Ministry & Manner.

Matt 10:16-23 – Jesus provides additional instruction.

To our knowledge, none of this happened during the specific short-term mission the Apostles were launching.

Jesus is providing long-term instructions here.

Illus: Teaching kids to drive – we give a lot of instructions that aren't relevant yet... but will be someday.

Sheep Among Wolves (Matt 10:16)

Mt 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

- Sheep – harmless, defenseless, but stupid
- Wolves – alpha predators

You are being placed into a dangerous situation.

What makes it dangerous? Your message will engage a predatory instinct in others who will seek to devour you.

2 Cor 2:15-16 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? **To some people, our message will smell like death.**

Instruction: Wise as Snakes, Harmless as Doves

- Snakes – shrewd, instinctively get out of the way and dodge
- Doves – no bile, considered pure and clean, innocent

Jesus provides us with a balanced instruction. **Be cautious without compromise, deception, or malice.**

Watch Out! (Matt 10:17)

Mt 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

What men? Anyone. **Opposition can come from anywhere.**

- Councils – local courts
- Synagogues – local assemblies (not necessarily of worship), up to 23 Jewish men.

They had the authority to administer punishment (flogging).

2 Cor 11:23-24 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

Escalated Attention (Matt 10:18)

Mt 10:18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

- This foreshadows the ministry of Paul and the later ministry of the Apostles.
- This is an escalation, rising in the ranks of human government.

Notice the transition from avoiding persecution to recognizing that it is unavoidable.

Instruction: Embrace the Purpose

“for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.”

Testimony (KJV) – bear witness, Gr: martyr

The escalation to a higher court will be useful to the mission to “bear witness”. **God ordained this opportunity.**

- **Bear witness of:** Christ, your Conviction, Character
- **Bear witness to:** Kings, Gentiles (a wider audience)

Notice that Jesus speaks of bearing witness to Gentiles (future), but not now (Mt 10:5).

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What to Say (Matt 10:19-20)

Mt 10:19-20 *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

Recall: Unlearned, uneducated men (generally)

They were unfamiliar with protocol before courts, councils, Kings and congregations and lacked eloquence.

The need of the moment (representing Christ to courts & kings) was at least as significant as food and clothes, which Christ promised to supply (Mt. 6:25-34).

- This isn't meant to prop up unprepared preachers.
Illus: Since Jesus promised food and clothing to those who seek first the Kingdom, do we have to work?
- This is a crisis promise.

Note: This is a Trinity spotting.

Betrayed by Closest Bonds (Matt 10:21)

Mt 10:21 *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

- Notice the strong response from those rejecting Christ.
Illus: Strange Uncle Harry the salesman – **You avoid and limit time with him. You don't kill him.**
- Notice the committed allegiance to Christ among His followers.
 - Relationships are reordered.
 - Priorities are reordered. **By proclaiming Christ, they are risking their lives and livelihood.**
Illus: Pakistan. Christians are generally kept poor.

Hated by All (Matt 10:22)

Mt 10:22 *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

- **Hated by all** - The problem is not with a sect, race, or place. **It is the human condition!**
- What is "Enduring to the End?"
Those who endure (in faithfulness) to the end (of life/time) shall be saved (nothing lost, much gained).
Luke 21:16-19 *"But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. "By your endurance you will gain your lives. (NASB95)*
- **How can some perish without losing a hair?** The Book of Remembrance.
- **Saved in what context?**
 - We know Christians can falter at this. **Ex:** Peter, John Mark
 - We know Christians can be restored after failing and go on to sacrifice. **Ex:** Peter, John Mark
 - We know that to lose your life is to gain it.
Mt 16:25 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*
 - We know that to give your life to die produces more abundant life.
John 12:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*
 - We know those who suffer well earn a great reward.
Revelation 6:9 *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*
Endurance doesn't "earn" salvation (from sin); it demonstrates salvation.
Those who endured are promised salvation from loss and gain a great reward.

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Town to Town (Matt 10:23)

Mt 10:23 *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

This passage is straightforward, except for the last phrase.

Where does the phrase, “Son of man be come” come from?

Daniel 7:13–14 *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

This is the origin. In this passage, it appears to be the Resurrection / Ascension.

1. This phrase is like the coming of the Kingdom of God.

- Jesus was born a King (**Matt 2:2**)
- John & Jesus & Apostles & we preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (the kingdom of God is at hand)
- We pray, “thy Kingdom come” (**Matt 6:10**)
- **Mt 12:28** *“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”*
- Jesus received the Kingdom at His ascension (**Dan 7:13-14**)
- The Kingdom will come in fulness (**Rev 21:2** – New Jerusalem comes down adorned as a bride)

The Kingdom is the realization of the reign of Jesus Christ and is an already / not yet reality.

2. This phrase is like the “Day of the Lord”

- There have been more than one “Day of the Lord” in history.
They are days of judgment, but only foreshadow.
- There is an ultimate “Day of the Lord” lying ahead.

What are possible fulfilments of the “coming of the Son of Man” in this passage?

1. Resurrection / Ascension (**Dan 7:13-14**)

Matt 16:28 *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Matt 28:18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

But, this event did not truncate their ministry in Judea/Galilee.

2. Pentecost

John 14:23 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

But, this event did not truncate their ministry in Judea/Galilee. It actually expanded it.

3. His Second Coming at the End of the Age

Matt 24:30 *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Matt 25:31 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

This view requires us cut this passage out and say it doesn’t apply to us now.

4. Destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)

- A “Day of the Lord”, a coming of the Son of Man (in judgment). **Malachi 4:6**
- A time when the mission to the towns of Israel was ongoing and would have been impacted.
- The flow of the text and its natural sense to the original hearers and to us is maintained.

This option and this understanding of “coming of the Son of Man” does not dictate its other uses.

Regardless, the point is that there is more ministry than time. If one doesn’t hear, go to another!

Jesus masterfully provides practical wisdom for difficult ministry. Balances Prudence & Purity, Preservation & Purpose.