

John 3:16 teaches us that God's love for lost mankind was a basis for giving His Son as the ransom for our sins, that whosoever places their trust in Christ will be saved. In this next section of Matthew, we find that the compassion of Jesus Christ toward the scattered sheep of Israel was His basis for setting apart 12 men to the work of apostleship and sending them into the Jewish communities.

The Need (9:35-38)

In His ministry, Jesus gained exposure to the true plight of the Jewish people. He visited every city and village He passed, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of sickness and disease He encountered. Given His wisdom and experience, He understood the true spiritual condition of the Jews better than anyone. What did He see and how did He feel about it?

Ecclesiastes 1:16-18 tells us that much wisdom is a burden. For Christ, His wisdom coupled with His love, produced a knowledge of the deeper needs of the people and a compassion to see the truth ministered to them, which could free them from the bondage of sin.

The people of Israel were described as fainting and scattered abroad. Let's define these terms.

Fainted –

Scattered abroad –

In his Word Pictures in the New Testament, A.T. Robertson states, "they were harassed, importuned, bewildered by those who should have taught them, hindering them from entering into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 23:13), and ladening them with legalistic burdens of morality (Matt 23:1-4)."

How is this consistent with the way the Pharisees treated some of the Jews? See Matthew 9:11.

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day, but they were not good shepherds. They were not concerned with the welfare of the sheep. Jesus the Great Shepherd, as He surveyed His flocks, saw them as wild, untended sheep, without the guidance and protection of a shepherd. His heart was moved to compassion by their state.

Read Ezekiel 34:1-6 and translate how the description of a bad shepherd practically affected the lives of God's people.

Seeing the sad spiritual state of the Jews, Jesus made a remark to His disciples. I believe this was a general remark made to the host of those who followed Him. He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (NASB) Jesus was calling His disciples to pray for the Father to send out laborers into the fields of mankind.

What is the harvest? If we look at the use of the term harvest in Scriptures, it was often used to describe God's judgment (see Isaiah 17:10-11, Joel 3:11-13, Matthew 13:30, Revelation 14:14-20). To properly understand the use of the phrase here, we must look at the context. In Matthew 10, Jesus sends out the 12 disciples. Read Matthew 10:5-8. What are the disciples sent to do and where are they to go?

Based on the above passage, what is the harvest that Jesus defines as plentiful?

Jesus aptly notes that there were few workers equipped to go out into the harvest and do this important work. That is focus of the 10th chapter of Matthew. Up to this point, the disciples were following, looking, and listening. There is now a transition to doing.

How did things get this bad though? Where were the good shepherds? Not only were the sheep scattered, besides John the Baptist and Jesus there were no other good shepherds to be found.

A Call to Discipleship

Let's talk about Abraham for a moment. Read Hebrews 11:8-16. God made a promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12 in which He told Abraham that if he would follow Him, he give him a land and make him a blessing to all nations. Did Abraham live to see the fulfillment of this promise?

Now read Genesis 18:17-19. Back when God made a covenant with Abraham, what was the means by which God was going to fulfill the covenant promises made to Abraham, to make him a blessing to the whole world?

Now consider the covenant God made with Israel as a nation, that He would bless them with the land of Canaan. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. What would be the means of achieving this blessing?

Read Exodus 23:27-31. Was Israel going to realize the fullness of the promise in one generation?

Now read Judges 2:6-10. Did this first generation of Israelites to go into the Promised Land fulfill their responsibility in this generational covenant with God? Using your knowledge of Israel's history, what happened as a result?

This was a systemic problem in Israel. There were always spiritual ups and down resulting in ups and downs in their prosperity as a people. Now read Malachi 4:5-6. This is a prophecy of John the Baptist's ministry. What was his ministry going to usher in and why?

Is it legitimate for us to equate discipleship with rearing children? Does Scripture support this? Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 1:2, 3:4-5, Titus 1:4, 3 John 4 as you consider this question.

Let's move on now to the work of Christ. Jesus established His kingdom during His earthly ministry and His church, which is at the forefront of His kingdom work in this world. Read Daniel 2:44-45 and 7:13-14, which speak about the kingdom to be established by Christ. Would this be a single or multi-generation work?

Now consider the Lord's church. Read the Great Commission of the church in Matthew 28:18-20. Was the work of the church to be fulfilled in a single generation?

Considering the span of God's people from Abraham and Israel to the Kingdom and Church work in the days of Christ, what role does discipleship play in bringing about the fulfillment of God's promises?

Think about how many of Jesus' disciples were formerly disciples of John, including all of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:21-22). John preached the gospel to them and then began discipling them. Jesus continued the process and now He was sending some of them out. Did Jesus Christ embrace the concept of discipleship? Read Matthew 4:19, John 17:23-26, and 14:12 for further insight.

If Jesus embraced the concept of discipleship so strongly, shouldn't we?

The Twelve (10:1-4)

Jesus begins by calling the twelve selected disciples to Himself and granting them power (meaning authority in the Greek) to do three things. Complete the following sentences and define the terms in the last two.

The 12 apostles were given authority to:

- Cast out _____
- Heal all manner of _____ –
- Heal all manner of _____ –

Starting in verse two, Matthew now identifies the names of these twelve men, and refers to them as “apostles”, this being the first time we read this word in his gospel. Define apostle.

When we think about this definition, we might wonder why we couldn’t have apostles today. Aren’t all Christians considered ambassadors for Christ? (See 2 Corinthians 5:20) Read the following passages and piece together the Biblical doctrine of apostleship.

Acts 1:16-26 –

Acts 15:2 –

1 Corinthians 12:28 –

Ephesians 2:19-20 –

2 Corinthians 12:11-12 –

Revelation 21:14 –

Clearly, this day was special and foundational in the organization and history of Christ’s church in this world. These twelve men (minus Judas Iscariot) were stepping into an office they would occupy forever.

The names of the twelve apostles are provided to us. Wonderful books have been written piecing together the information we are given in Scripture and history to provide rich biographies of these men. We will provide a thumbnail sketch of each man below.

Simon Peter – Peter was actually a name the Lord gave Simon. He was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee with his brother Andrew. He is the most quoted apostle in the Scriptures, probably because he appeared to be the boldest of the apostles. Throughout the gospels, we see the transformation of Peter from a brash, arrogant man to a bold and humble servant of Christ and recognized leader of the apostles. Peter was married and likely brought his wife with him throughout his ministry (Matthew 8:14, 1 Corinthians 9:5). According to tradition and in accordance with Scripture, Peter was crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus (John 21:18).

Andrew – Andrew was a fisherman with his brother Peter and was actually one of the first to begin following Christ at the direction of John the Baptist (John 1:36-40). He then brought his brother Simon (Peter) to meet Christ (John 1:41-42). Andrew was the one who brought the young boy with the loaves and fishes to Jesus (John 6:5-9). Other than this, there are few things recorded about Andrew in Scripture, but he was known as Peter's brother (Matthew 10:2). He was not part of the inner circle of Peter, James, and John, and appears to be the quieter brother, perhaps balancing Peter's boldness.

James the Son of Zebedee – James was a fisherman, along with his brother John. He and John are referred to as the Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17), perhaps indicating that they had a fiery disposition. He and John apparently shared a large ego because when their mother requested that they be placed on Jesus' right and left hand in His kingdom, they both assented that they could drink of the cup required to receive such an honor (Matthew 20:20-22). James was apparently very zealous because he was targeted for martyrdom by King Herod (Acts 12:1-3). He was the first of the faithful apostles to die.

John – John was a Galilean fisherman with his brother James. He was apparently the younger of the two brothers and held a special place of favor with Jesus, who loved him dearly (John 13:23, 21:20). Apparently, his temper was matched by his affection. John apparently had some connections with the high priest and followed Jesus upon His arrest to his trial before Caiaphas (John 18:15-16). John was given the responsibility of taking care of Jesus' mother, Mary, upon His death (John 19:26-27). He outraced Peter to the tomb upon hearing of the resurrection (John 20:1-5). He was known as the Apostle of Love because of his writings in his gospel, and epistles. He was exiled to the Isle of Patmos later in life and received the vision of Revelations while worshipping on the Lord's Day.

Philip – Philip is considered to be a leader among the second group of the apostles. He was from Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee just like Andrew and Peter. Philip was the one who brought Nathanael (Bartholomew) to Jesus after hearing Him preach (John 1:44-46). Apparently Philip and Bartholomew were already friends before their ministry together as apostles. Philip, like all of us, struggled with faith even after seeing God provide for past needs (John 6:6-7), and didn't always get things the first time (John 14:8-11). Philip's story, like ours, is a story of a very fallible human person being given grace to overcome and becoming useful to the Lord's service.

Bartholomew (Nathaniel) – Bartholomew was apparently a close friend of Philip, who brought him to Jesus (John 1:44-46). When Bartholomew heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, he replied, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Apparently, he initially had a prejudice against Nazareth, one that made him feel superior to its inhabitants. Fortunately, his curiosity and faith in Philip overcame his prejudice and he went to meet Jesus. Jesus called Bartholomew a man in whom was no deceit (guile). He was apparently a plainspoken person who called things like he saw them. When Jesus revealed that he saw Bartholomew under the fig tree before Philip called him, we find the first clear profession of Jesus’ identity among the apostles. Bartholomew called Jesus the Son of God and King of Israel. Being plainspoken could work to his advantage when his heart was rightly directed! Apparently Philip was talking to the Lord under that tree and Jesus’ knowledge of that event made it clear who Jesus really was. Bartholomew would continue to bear witness to Christ for the rest of his life. History indicates Bartholomew served as a missionary to India, Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, and eventually was martyred in Armenia.

Thomas – Thomas is most well known for his initial doubt of the resurrection of Jesus (John 20:24-29). He appears to be a pessimist by nature, which may have fueled his doubt. His pessimism, however, did not dampen his devotion to Jesus (John 11:7-8,16). Thomas appeared to love the Lord fervently and desired to be with Him, wherever the journey might lead (John 14:4-7). In fact once his doubts were quenched, Thomas made a significant and essential confession about the identity of Jesus when he fell at his feet (John 20:28). According to history, Thomas’ love for Jesus took him all the way to India where he ministered and eventually was martyred.

Matthew – Matthew is the author of this gospel and was a tax collector before becoming a disciple and eventually an apostle of Jesus Christ. His background was already discussed in some depth in the “An Introduction to Matthew” lesson.

James the Less – “James the Less” as he is called in the King James Version doesn’t refer to his importance as an apostle, but either to his height or age. He is called the son of Alphaeus, which also happens to be the name of Matthew’s father (Mark 2:14). It is possible that James the Less and Matthew were brothers, or simply had fathers of the same name. Some also conjecture that his mother was a sister to Mary, making him a cousin of Jesus (John 19:25 – Cleophas is a form of the name Alphaeus). Very little is known of this James in Scripture, but history tells us that he preached the gospel in what was then known as Persia (Iran) and was martyred there.

Thaddaeus (Judas) –Thaddaeus is alternately referred to as Lebbaeus, Judas the son of James, and “Judas, not Iscariot”. Matthew 10:3 refers to Thaddaeus as the surname (last name) of this man. It is possible that Judas was his given name but Lebbaeus Thaddaeus was his nickname. Lebbaeus means “heart child” and Thaddaeus means “breast child”, indicating that he had a kind disposition and was the baby of his family. Perhaps he embraced this name after the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, not wanting to be confused or identified with him. We read of Thaddeus asking Jesus a question in John 14:18-23, indicating his interest in understanding the teachings of Christ. History indicates that Thaddeus did missionary work in Syria and was eventually bludgeoned to death with a club after seeing success there.

Simon the Zealot – Simon is consistently referred to as Simon the Zealot in Scripture, perhaps in part to distinguish him from Simon Peter. Besides being mentioned in the list of apostles throughout Scripture, no other act or words are ascribed to him. By his name, however, we do learn a bit about his past. While the word zealot could refer to a zealous nature, it is more likely a reference to the Zealots, a sect of activist Jews who opposed the Roman rule. The Zealots were organized during the Maccabean period between the writing of the Old and New Testaments. They were involved in actual insurrections against the Roman government frequently using guerilla tactics and assassinations to accomplish their purposes. If Simon was originally a part of this group, he would no doubt have initially had interest in Christ because of an assumption that He would set up an earthly kingdom and overthrow Rome. Eventually, his anticipation of earthly dominance must have been overcome by the greater reality of the spiritual victories Christ won. The historical accounts of Simon Zealotes vary and don't provide a consistent recount of his ministry and death.

Judas Iscariot – Judas Iscariot is consistently the last of the apostles mentioned in every list, often with a description as the one who betrayed Jesus Christ. Iscariot means that Judas was from Kerioth, a small town in Judea. Interestingly, Judas appeared to be the only non-Galilean of the apostles. The rest were from Galilee. Christ handpicked Judas as an apostle as we read in this chapter, but He also knew that Judas was not a true believer and would betray Him (John 6:64-71). Judas' betrayal was prophesied in the Old Testament (Zechariah 11:12-13), yet it was a clear choice Judas personally made, one that has damned him to a horrible fate in eternity (Mark 14:21). Judas carried the money given to the apostles and Christ and apparently stole from this collection at his whim (John 12:5-6). He ultimately betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver after being possessed by Satan (Matthew 26:14-16). Rather than the glory of a martyr's death, Judas died the most ignoble death of all; he died by his own hand in shame (not repentance) for his crime (Matthew 27:3-5).

Their Mission (10:5-8)

The first thing Jesus does with the twelve is to define the scope of their ministry. He told them to NOT go to the Gentiles or to the Samaritans; they were only to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Keep in mind that from a chronological standpoint, the apostles already witnessed Jesus preach in Samaria (John 4) and saw him heal the servant of a Gentile (Matthew 8:5-13). Why would Jesus limit their ministry? Consider Matthew 15:21-28.

The answer to the previous question begs another question. Why did the Father limit the scope of Jesus' ministry to the Jews? Read Romans 3:1-2 and 9:3-5.

What significance did the tearing of the veil in the temple when Christ was crucified have with the expansion of ministry in the Great Commission? Read Matthew 27:50-51 and 28:18-20.

Jesus sent the apostles to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”. Notice the connection between this phrase and Jesus’ statement in Matthew 9:36. By calling the Israelites “lost sheep”, was He making a statement that they all were lost, saved, or does it mean something else? Read Matthew 10:7-11.

The message the apostles were to preach, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” was the same message being preached by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2) and by Jesus after John the Baptist was imprisoned (Matthew 4:12-17). Having viewed these other passages, what part of the message isn’t mentioned explicitly in Matthew 10:7? Do you believe this concept was part of the message the apostles preached? Why or why not?

Jesus then instructs the apostles to perform the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12): heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils. As we discussed earlier, the miracles were proof that the apostles were messengers of God and that their message must be heard and obeyed.

In regard to the miraculous signs, Jesus tells the apostles, “freely ye have received, freely give”. What did this mean for the apostles?

How does “freely ye have received, freely give” apply to us today? Are there parallels we can draw? Consider 1 Peter 4:8-11 and John 13:35.

Provision and Punishment (10:9-15)

As Jesus sends out the apostles on their first mission trip, He provides them with explicit instructions that continue to echo today. Matthew's account of this commission is complemented by Mark and Luke's accounts in their gospels. Read Mark 6:7-11 and Luke 9:1-6

Jesus' instruction regarding money and extra supplies is a bridge of practical instruction between His statement in verse 8, "freely ye have received, freely give" and in verse 10, "the workman is worthy of his meat." Jesus tells the apostles to provide neither gold, silver, nor brass (copper) in their purses.¹ By this He meant that they should not acquire or procure money for themselves before or during their journey, either for meeting their necessities or for the purposes of accumulating wealth.

In verse 10, Jesus also forbids bringing additional supplies. Define some of the words that have fallen out of English usage in the King James Version.

Scrip –

Staves –

What is the purpose of leaving these supplies behind? I believe there are three primary reasons:

- 1) The worker is _____ of his meal

For those reading this passage in the King James Version, note that the Greek word for "workman" in verse 10 is the exact same Greek word translated as "laborer" in Matthew 9:37-38. Paul quotes Luke's rendering of this statement almost verbatim in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. Also consider Paul's comments to the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 9:3-11. Why should ministers of the gospel be supported by those who are benefited by their ministry?

Continue reading 1 Corinthians 9:12-18. Are there exceptions? If so, under what circumstances?

¹ Regarding "purse", The New Manners and Customs of the Bible by Freeman and Chadwick states, "Greek *zone*, (dzo'-nay); a belt; a pocket: girdle, purse. In your belts is, literally, in your girdles. It is quite common to this day to use the folds of the girdle as a pouch, or pocket for keeping money. Money is also sometimes carried in a bag, which is put in the belt. This is referred to in the parallel passage to our text-verse in Luke, where the word rendered "purse" signifies a bag. A person referred to as a "moneybags" is a rich, often extravagant, person."

- 2) _____ on others for provision allowed the apostles to focus on _____.

The apostles all left their jobs to follow Jesus at His direction. Read Matthew 4:18-22. Jesus didn't call them to go back to work and add some ministry to it too. They were called to full-time vocational Christian ministry. Consider Acts 6:1-4, speaking of the ordination of the first deacons in the early church. What did their ordination allow the apostles to do? What parallels do you see between the ordination of deacons and the passage we are studying in Matthew 10?

- 3) Relying upon others for provision taught them to rely upon _____.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the disciples that if they would seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then God would provide for all their needs, meaning they wouldn't have to worry (have excessive care or concern) about having the essentials of life (Matthew 6:33). This passage is a promise for everyone who would step out in faith and follow Christ, regardless of our calling in His Kingdom. For some of us, our calling involves a steady job in the workplace. For the 12 apostles, it involved leaving their former jobs behind and following Christ in faith. They would now be heralds of the gospel and would be dependent upon the generosity of others to provide for their needs. They would still be working for a living, but without the certainty of a consistent or predictable paycheck. Does their change in occupation affect the application of Matthew 6:33 to their lives?

This is a very challenging but important lesson. One of the greatest passages of encouragement found in Scripture (Philippians 4:13) was borne out of Paul's experiences with the ebb and flow of ministerial support. Read Philippians 4:10-14 and explain what Paul learned and how he learned it.

Upon entering a town or village, they were to inquire who was "worthy" and seek to stay there. What does "worthy" mean? Read verses 11-14.

Sending men out to depend upon the hospitality of the residents of a community sounds strange to our Western sensibilities, especially in 21st century America. It would be appropriate for us to consider the cultural concept of hospitality prevalent in Jesus' day.

ORIENTAL HOSPITALITY

Oriental hospitality consisted of being willing... "to entertain or receive a stranger (sojourner) into one's home as an honored guest and to provide the guest with food, shelter, and protection. This was not merely an oriental custom or good manners but a sacred duty that everyone was expected to observe.

Only the depraved would violate this obligation.

Hospitality probably grew out of the needs of nomadic life. Since public inns were rare, a traveler had to depend on the kindness of others and had a right to expect it. This practice was extended to every sojourner, even a runaway slave (Deut. 23:15-16) or one's archenemy.

The Pentateuch contains specific commands for the Israelites to love the strangers as themselves (Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:18-19) and to look after their welfare (Deut. 24:17-22). The reason for practicing hospitality was that the Israelites themselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

Some acts of hospitality were rewarded, the most notable of which was Rahab's (Josh. 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). Breaches of hospitality were condemned and punished, such as those of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-11) and Gibeah (Judg. 19:10-25). The only exception was Jael who was praised for killing Sisera (Judg. 4:18-24).

Hospitality seemed to form the background of many details in the life of Jesus and the early church (Matt. 8:20; Luke 7:36; 9:2-5; 10:4-11). It was to be a characteristic of bishops and widows (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Titus 1:8) and a duty of Christians (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9). It was a natural expression of brotherly love (Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:8-9) and a necessary tool of evangelism. Furthermore, one might even entertain angels or the Lord unaware (Heb. 13:2; Matt. 25:31-46)."²

To salute a house was to give a greeting and to let "your peace" come upon it is to pronounce a blessing on the home. To remove "your peace" was to remove your blessing from the home. Read Hebrews 7:7 and consider the account of David, Nabal, and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25.

What was the Lord granting these apostles when He sent them out into to the people?

Based on the account from 1 Samuel 25 and the text of Matthew 10:12-15, how significant was the granting or removal of peace by the apostles to a household or community?

² Ngan, L. L. E. (2003). Hospitality. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler, Ed.) (786-787). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Finally, the apostles were told to shake the dust off of their feet when they leave a house or town that rejected them. Read Acts 13:5, 18:6, and Ezekiel 33:7-9.

The judgment God predicted for those who rejected the gospel preached by the apostles would be more severe than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah was an example of God's wrath against sin, not an exception (2 Peter 2:6).

Preparing for Rejection (10:16-23)

Jesus begins the next section of the commission to the apostles by preparing them for the worst. Their message will not be universally accepted or even tolerated. Persecution WILL come. I do not believe the situations Jesus describes (flogging, taken before kings, and martyrdom) were experienced by the apostles during this short missionary journey, but have definitely been realized since Christ's ascension. We therefore need to recognize that there is application for us in this passage!

The rejection the apostles (and future Christians) would face would come from four fronts:

1. The _____ (verse 17)
2. _____ (verse 18)
3. _____ (verse 21)
4. The _____ (verse 22)

We will discuss each of these sources of rejection and persecution. It is important to notice that as Jesus foretells of their trials, He also provides guidance on how to handle it and promises that Divine help and blessing will accompany their sacrifices.

As we previously discussed, Jesus was sending the apostles to the "lost sheep" of Israel. Now, He switches the analogy by making the apostles the sheep. He tells them, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves". Who are the wolves?

Explain why sending the apostles out as "sheep in the midst of wolves" is counter-intuitive.

Jesus advises the apostles that because of their precarious mission, they needed to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves. We recognize the serpent as the creature Satan possessed in the Garden of Eden. It is described as “more crafty than any other beast of the field” (Genesis 3:1, ESV) Even though we are sheep, we are called to be crafty, or wise in regard to dealing with the world. The point of calling the apostles (and future Christians) sheep in this passage is not an assessment of their intellect, but of their vulnerability. The call to be as wise as serpents must be understood by harmonizing Scriptures. Consider Matthew 10:23, Nehemiah 6:1-3, Acts 9:23-25, Colossians 4:5-6 and 2 Timothy 2:23.

Jesus tempered his admonition to be as wise as serpents by instructing them to be as harmless (meaning innocent) as doves. Being wise like a serpent does not condone moral corruption (like Satan). Jesus was holding them to the highest standard of ethics and morality as His messengers. Consider Acts 16:25-34, 1 Thessalonians 2:10, Titus 2:7-8. How would being “harmless as doves” protect them among the wolves?

Jesus’ encouragement to avoid persecution does not trump their obligation to preach the gospel boldly. Even though they would try to avoid unnecessary persecution, persecution would occur. We even read of the Apostle Paul heading to Jerusalem, knowing by prophecy that bonds awaited him; yet he was compelled by God’s Spirit to go anyway (Acts 21:10-14). How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory perspectives?

The following is an excerpt from Advice to Sufferers, written by John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim’s Progress. Bunyan was not a stranger to persecution. He was jailed for several years because he would not stop preaching the gospel. During the time of his incarceration, his wife and children were left alone and without a provider. Yet, it was during his imprisonment that he wrote Pilgrim’s Progress. Years later, he wrote this book as well.

1. Objection: But may we not fly in a time of persecution? Your pressing upon us, that persecution is ordered and managed by God, makes us afraid to fly.

Answer: First, having regard to what was said afore about a call to suffer; thou mayest do in this even as it is in thy heart. If it is in thy heart to fly, fly: if it be in thy heart to stand, stand. Any thing but a denial of the truth. He that flies, has warrant to do so; he that stands, has warrant to do so. Yea, the same man may both fly and stand, as the call and working of God with his heart may be. Moses fled (Exo 2:15), Moses stood (Heb 11:27). David fled (1 Sam 19:12), David stood (24:8). Jeremiah fled (Jer 37:11,12), Jeremiah stood (38:17). Christ withdrew himself (Luke

9:10), Christ stood (John 18:1-8). Paul fled (2 Cor 11:33), Paul stood (Acts 20:22,23).

There are therefore few rules in this case. The man himself is best able to judge concerning his present strength, and what weight this or that argument has upon his heart to stand or fly. I should be loath to impose upon any man in these things; only, if thou fliest, take two or three cautions with thee:—

(1.) Do not fly out of a slavish fear, but rather because flying is an ordinance of God, opening a door for the escape of some, which door is opened by God's providence, and the escape countenanced by God's Word (Matt 10:23).

(2.) When thou art fled, do as much good as thou canst in all quarters where thou comest, for therefore the door was opened to thee, and thou bid to make thy escape (Acts 8:1-5).

(3.) Do not think thyself secure when thou art fled; it was providence that opened the door, and the Word that did bid thee escape: but whither, and wherefore, that thou knowest not yet. Uriah the prophet fled into Egypt, because there dwelt men that were to take him, that he might be brought again to Jerusalem to die there (Jer 26:21).

(4.) Shouldest thou fly from where thou art, and be taken in another place; the most that can be made of it—thy taking the opportunity to fly, as was propounded at first—can be but this, thou wast willing to commit thyself to God in the way of his providence, as other good men have done, and thy being now apprehended has made thy call clear to suffer here or there, the which before thou wert in the dark about.

(5.) If, therefore, when thou hast fled, thou art taken, be not offended at God or man: not at God, for thou art his servant, thy life and thy all are his; not at man, for he is but God's rod, and is ordained, in this, to do thee good. Hast thou escaped? Laugh. Art thou taken? Laugh. I mean, be pleased which way soever things shall go, for that the scales are still in God's hand.

(6.) But fly not, in flying, from religion; fly not, in flying, for the sake of a trade; fly not, in flying, that thou mayest have ease for the flesh: this is wicked, and will yield neither peace nor profit to thy soul; neither now, nor at death, nor at the Day of Judgment.

I believe this is sage advice for us at a time when persecution appears to loom on the horizon.

Persecution by the Religious

Jesus warns the apostles that they would be delivered up to councils and scourged in synagogues. The councils to which He most likely referred were Jewish religious councils, like the Sanhedrin or other groups organized by the Jews. See John 11:47-53, Matthew 26:59-68, and Acts 23:1-5 as examples. Why did Paul received 39 lashes? Read 2 Corinthians 11:24 and Deuteronomy 25:2-3.

Religious councils are not unique to Judaism. Soon after Christianity was embraced as the national religion of the Roman Empire, Emperor Constantine convened a religious council that branded a group of Christians known as Donatists as heretics and began persecuting them. Even today, Muslim councils operating under Sharia law decree and execute persecution against Christian missionaries and converts.

Persecution by the Government

In Jesus' day, religious councils had limited authority and would seek government intervention to enact persecution (John 18:29-31). At other times, the effect of Christianity was so pervasive and life altering for a community that government became involved to "keep the peace" (Acts 17:5-8).

Again, we don't know of any of the apostles being brought before government officials before the Day of Pentecost. However, it did not take long for governmental powers to take note of the spread of the church. The 12 Apostles and the Apostle Paul faced trials and judgment before Herod (Acts 12:1-4), Felix (Acts 23:23-30), Agrippa (Acts 25:20-22) and ultimately Caesar himself (Acts 25:10-12).

The reason for being brought before the governors and kings was for, "a testimony against them and the Gentiles" according to the King James Version. Most other respected translations speak of their appearance before the governmental officials to be a testimony to them. Consider Paul's appearance before Felix (Acts 24:24-26), King Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29), and Caesar's court (Philippians 1:12-13, 4:21-22). Which translation do you find more consistent with Scripture?

In Matthew 10:19-20, the apostles are told to take no thought about what they were to speak when they are handed over, because the Holy Spirit will speak through them in that difficult hour. To "take no thought" means to not worry. Is Jesus only addressing being handed over to governmental authorities or also being handed over to religious councils and the synagogues? Read Acts 6:8-15 and 7:54-60. I believe Jesus is addressing both scenarios.

Throughout history, we read of amazing strength and statements made by Christian martyrs. God has held true to His promise to speak directly through the saints by His Spirit in this hour of great need. Consider the last words of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr.

Ignatius of Antioch (Death - 110 AD) was a student of John the Apostle. He was ordered by Caesar to be arrested and was sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts in Rome. He longed for giving his life for his Savior, saying, "May the wild beasts be eager to rush upon me. If they be unwilling, I will compel them. Come, crowds of wild beasts, come, tearings and manglings, wracking of bones and hacking of limbs, come, cruel tortures of the devil, only let me attain unto Christ."

Polycarp of Smyrna (Death – 165 AD) was also said to be a disciple of John and Ignatius, the last to be taught personally by the apostles. He was arrested and brought into an amphitheater filled with a great multitude of people. Wood was collected and made into a pile. Polycarp asked not to be fastened to the stake. "Leave me thus", he said. "He who strengthens me to endure the flames will also enable me to stand firm at the stake without being fastened with nails". The woodpile was lighted. While Polycarp prayed with a loud voice, "Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I praise thee that thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to participate in the number of thy witnesses, and in the cup of thy Christ", the flames consumed him.

Justin Martyr (Death – 165) was scourged and beheaded in Rome with six other Christians. His last words were, "We desire nothing more than to suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ, for this gives us salvation and joyfulness before his dreadful judgment seat."

Many more thousands of names and testimonies could no doubt be added to this list. I believe the same promise for spiritual strength and wisdom holds true today for those who are called to face such persecution at the hands of men. There is no reason why God would not honor this promise today.

Persecution by Family

The thought of persecution by family is hard to comprehend or bear. Jesus said that brother will betray brother, a father his child, and a child its parents. How could such wickedness and betrayal be possible? Read Genesis 4:1-8 and John 3:19-20.

Persecution by the World

Christianity can be very hard for a people pleaser because all who will live godly will suffer persecution. Although Christians are supposed to be people of exemplary morals and conduct, their reputation is often attacked by unbelievers. Sometimes, society as a whole will embrace an anti-Christian sentiment, as we see developing in our country. Throughout history Christians have been accused of:

- Cannibalism –
- Disruption of Business –
- Gross immorality (including incest) –
- Antifamily actions –
- Poverty –
- Atheism –
- Lack of Patriotism –
- Antisocial Behavior –
- Causing Disasters –

Jesus culminates the four levels of persecution (religious, governmental, family, and societal) by providing the promise: “it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” (NASB) This was a promise meant to encourage and provide hope to the apostles, a light at the end of the tunnel so to speak. When Jesus says that they will (future tense) be saved, what does this mean? Could it refer to their lives being saved from death or is it speaking of eternal salvation? Refer back to verses 17-21.

Jesus’ audience is the apostles who were all saved with the exception of Judas Iscariot. He would not even be part of this extended missionary effort Jesus was speaking of after His crucifixion and resurrection. How could the remaining apostles, who were already saved, be saved in the future?

At first glance, the passage appears to make final salvation a condition of endurance, which is a dangerous interpretation. The issue raised in Matthew 10:23 is called the “perseverance of the saints”, a doctrine that we (at The Anchor) have addressed in our Declaration of Faith. Article 4G states,

Of the Assurance of Salvation – Saved individuals will receive divine assurance confirming their salvation. Salvation is an experience in which a burdened sinner finds peace with God through Jesus Christ. The indwelling Spirit of God will continue thereafter to bear witness of conversion with the believer through His comfort, instruction, guidance, and correction. All true believers will endure in their faith in Christ to the end of their mortal life, their persevering attachment to Christ distinguishing them from false converts. Good works from a purified heart are also the proper evidence of salvation, and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through obedience to the Word of God. (emphasis added)

I do not believe that Jesus is saying that they will be saved because of their endurance in persecution, but that their endurance in persecution will prove that they are saved. Why is this important? Read Ephesians 2:8-10.

There are several other passages of Scripture that mirror Matthew 10:22. Consider Hebrews 3:12-14. For those reading the King James Version, note that verse 14 states, “*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;*” The phrase “we are made partakers” is in the perfect tense in Greek, indicating an action that took place in the past but continues to have effect today. Why is this important to our understanding of Hebrews 3:12-14?

Why must soul salvation precede persecution or martyrdom for it to be honored and recognized by Christ? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and 1 John 4:7-8.

Matthew 10:22 implies that someone who doesn't ultimately endure under persecution isn't really saved. How is this consistent with Scripture? Read Matthew 13:20-21.

Let's conclude our discussion of Matthew 10:22 by providing a bit of balance. The Apostle Peter is a prime example of a saved individual who initially faltered while under persecution (Matthew 26:69-75). Jesus prophesied his denial and told him that when he repented, he should strengthen the other brethren (Luke 22:31-34). There is no indication that Peter was a lost man when he denied Christ. Why did Peter deny Jesus and did he ever change? Read Matthew 26:36-41 and John 21:15-19.

Finally, in verse 23, Jesus tells the disciples that when they are persecuted in one city, they should flee to another because they will not be able to preach in every city before "the Son of Man comes." This is one of the more challenging passages in the Gospel of Matthew because there is much debate on the meaning of "the Son of Man comes." Before we delve into that, what is the practical point Jesus is making to His apostles with this statement?

Who is the "Son of Man" that would come? Read Daniel 7:13, Matthew 9:6, and 12:40.

Now for the more challenging question, what event is referred to by this passage? When would (or did) the Son of Man come? It would be helpful to look at a few different passages that refer to a coming of the Son of Man. Read Matthew 16:24-17:9 and 23:37-24:31. In your opinion, does the coming of the Son of Man refer to the same event in all of these passages?

Let's look at two significant acts of Divine judgment that were prophesied and occurred in the Old Testament time period. Pay special attention to the description of these events in Scripture.

Civil War and Oppression in Egypt

What is prophesied in Isaiah 19:1-4?

What similarities do you find with Matthew 10:23?

Destruction and Captivity of Jerusalem

Similar language was employed in regard to the first destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 585 BC. Read Zephaniah 1:1-18 and describe the prophecy.

Based on my study of Matthew 10:23, I believe Jesus is telling the apostles that they would not be able to complete their missionary journey to all the cities and villages of Israel before "the Son of Man be come" in judgment upon the nation. As we saw, this language is similar to prophetic language of judgment from the Old Testament. During the lifetime of some of these apostles, judgment came upon Judea and the City of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It was one of the most horrific events of human history.

What happened to Jerusalem in 70 AD?

After the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Christians enjoyed amazing growth on the Day of Pentecost and thrived in Jerusalem for a time. It took awhile for Christianity to begin to spread from Jerusalem, reaching out to the other communities of Israel and eventually to Samaria and the Gentile lands. Persecution soon ensued and Christians were faced with opposition in Jewish communities and had to work around significant bouts of political unrest among the Jewish people as a whole. The Jewish relationship with their Roman rulers was in turmoil and the Jews were eventually considered a menace to the Roman Empire because they would not participate in emperor worship. The Jews were also continuously involved in local rebellions around Jerusalem that wore on Roman patience.

During the years between the crucifixion of Christ and AD 70, the Jews experienced intermittent persecution and calamity. Early church historian Eusebius states that one of the members of the Roman Superior Court, Sejanus, tried to eradicate the entire Jewish race. Pontius Pilate made an attempt to ransack the Jewish temple. Eventually, the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula seized the synagogues in several cities and filled them with images and statues of himself. He also tried to transform the Jewish temple into a shrine of his own. Pilate later took money from the sacred Jewish temple treasury (the Corban) and used it to build an aqueduct. While Claudius was Roman Emperor, a fierce riot broke out in Jerusalem and 30,000 people trampled each other during the Feast of Passover. A civil war broke out between factions of Jewish priests resulting in several murders. Bandits became prominent in Jerusalem, killing people in broad daylight in crowded areas. During Emperor Nero's reign, the tension

with the Jews was rising to a new level as high-ranking Jews were taken and flogged with scourges and crucified in Jerusalem. Jews were being murdered throughout various cities in the Roman Empire.

Finally, the Roman Emperor Vespasian began a campaign to completely subdue the Jews. The residents of Judea suffered mightily and thousands of men, women, and children died. Ultimately, many of the Jews fled to Jerusalem, a city they thought to be an impregnable fortress. The Jewish historian Josephus estimates that the number of Jews that flocked to Jerusalem at the time of Passover in 70 AD numbered three million. The history of what follows is some of the saddest commentary on the human condition I have ever read. The Romans surrounded Jerusalem and shut it off from supply. Because of the stress of war, the massive overpopulation of the city, and the total lack of food, chaos ensued. Over the days and weeks they were captive in Jerusalem, mobs formed. Murder was common and corpses lined the streets and were even thrown over the city walls. Cannibalism of the basest sort was reported. Josephus said that the Roman General Titus, as he made his rounds, saw the valleys outside of Jerusalem filled with bodies and he groaned, raised his hands and called on God to witness that this was not his doing. Josephus also said that it was because of the madness of the people that they perished.

Eventually, the Romans overtook the city and burned it down. The temple was completely destroyed and has not been restored to this day. Jesus' words from Matthew 24:1-2 were true. *"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

Josephus estimates casualties over 1.1 million. By comparison, there were up to 620,000 casualties in the Civil War; 1.1 million total casualties in World War I; and around 60 million in World War II. While comparable to World War I in number of casualties, it is notable that this event occurred in one small country, focused on one city. It was a total devastation.

There has been no Jewish sacrifice at the temple since that time. When Jesus came in the flesh, He abolished the need for sacrifice and offering. When He came in judgment upon Jerusalem, He eradicated its practice. This event certainly altered the spread of the gospel in Israel.