

Who Do You Say That I Am?

*Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 126- Jesus Instructs the Apostles- Part 3 Unworthy Cities and the Promise of Persecution*

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Matthew 10:9-23

9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts,

10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

11 And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

12 As you enter the house, give it your greeting.

13 If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

14 Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

17 But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

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

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.

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.

22 You will be hated by all because of My name, but 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.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

This wasn't anything like they had imagined it would be. As Peter and Andrew; James and John; Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; James-Alphaeus' son; Thaddaeus; the former Terrorist, Simon; and Judas along with Levi- the man who wrote this Gospel Record (Matthew) sat around and heard Jesus instruct them on how they were to conduct themselves in the very *first* Ministry associated with the promised New Covenant- it was so different; so odd; so strange; and so unlike what they had seen from their former Teachers- the Pharisees. But it was also very different from what they thought following the Messiah would be like.

We must remember that the entire spiritual "*Realm of Thought*" back in the 1st Century Israel had been fashioned and was displayed by men that Jesus called, "*Hypocrites*" (the Pharisees). Now I have no idea where the Levitical Priests were during the Time Jesus was on the earth- but it is clear from reading the four Gospel Records that it was the Pharisees that *dominated* the religious Life of the Jews in the 1st Century while the Levites were completely silent. Yet when God the Holy Spirit "moved" on Moses and the Prophets to write the 39 Books of the Old Covenant- they **ONLY** established the Levitical Priesthood and said **NOT** one word about the Pharisees.

And this is important when you realize that what the Jews had been taught since the "Burden" of the Prophet Malachi- was the *Interpretation of the Law* brought about by the Pharisees and **NOT** a true and correct Understanding of what God had given to Moses. And so, **ALL** that those twelve men ever learned as they were growing up- was a *false* rendering of the inspired Hebrew Bible (39 Books). And so, what they believed about almost every Issue of Life and Eternity- including what the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" was and what the Messiah would do when He got here- was incorrect.

We also need to keep in mind as we go through this verse-by-verse "Journey" through the **Gospel of Matthew**- that the correct and full Understanding of every Word and Action of Jesus- will come to us as we

struggle to get the right and correct Context of what Jesus was saying and doing and why. And to do that- we must remember that the Old Covenant that was in force until Jesus rose from the Dead. And the Covenant that was established by God through Moses was a “*Come and See*” Covenant. So, in order for anyone to know about the one, true, and living God, who had chosen the Jews to be His people; and who ruled over Israel- you had to actually go to Israel and see for yourself. For example, you may remember that there was a time when the Queen of Sheba (probably modern-day Yemen) came to see King Solomon. So, she left her Kingdom and traveled over 1,300 miles on camels to meet with Solomon. Why? What would cause a Queen to leave her Kingdom and risk being attacked by robbers in order to meet with this man? Why didn’t she simply send her representatives? The Bible says she came to Solomon because she had heard of how God had blessed him. And Ezra infallibly wrote down what she said in **2Chronicles 9:5b-8**,

5 ...“It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.

6 “Nevertheless I did not believe their reports until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You surpass the report that I heard.

7 “How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.

8 “Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the Lord your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness.”

... and this is amazing!

But until this Queen actually visited Israel and spoke with King Solomon- she had no idea how great God was and how much He had blessed Solomon with Wisdom. But why didn’t she already know? Because in order to learn about God while the Old Covenant was in force- you HAD to physically go to Jerusalem!

But the New Covenant- that was brought about through the Life; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus Christ- is a “*Go and Tell*” Covenant. And with the Words of Jesus in **Matthew 28: 18b-20**:

18 ... "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

**19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

... Believers are now told to leave the Comfort and Safety and Security of our Homes; and we are to go out from here- to the pagan Nations of the world. And without any Hesitation or Fear- we are to loudly and unashamedly "herald" the glorious Gospel to every human! And we are to call those people to Faith and Repentance and for them to completely *abandon* their false religions. And we are to baptize them; and then we are to "shepherd" them by holding them Accountable to a genuine and honest Obedience to ALL that Jesus said.

And the "Authority" by which we are to do all of that- is that 2,000 years ago- Jesus said He had *already* been given ALL Authority in both Heaven and on the Earth!

But as Jesus is now teaching the twelve men He has chosen to be His Apostles- some of what He is saying sounds strange to those men. *"Don't acquire any gold, silver, or copper for our money-belts? Why not? Why conduct Ministry by purposefully having to depend on other people to support us? Doesn't Jesus realize that most of the 'rank and file' Jews at this moment in the 1st Century see the 'Religion of Jesus' as nothing more nor less than a branch of Judaism and NOT the Fulfillment of what God had given to Moses? And doesn't Jesus understand how hostile the Pharisees have been to Him and to what He has been teaching? And doesn't Jesus know that many people will be reluctant to support us- precisely because they are afraid of what the Pharisees might say and do to them?"*

So, they may have been thinking, *"Wouldn't it be better for us to be 'Self-sufficient' and to be able to pay our own Way as we preach? And why is Jesus so against us taking a staff? I mean we need our staffs to kill snakes and to protect ourselves from robbers. What has us NOT having a staff got to do with us heralding Jesus' Message? And what is all this talk about 'worthy' and 'unworthy' cities and houses?"*

Now as we try to look over Matthew's shoulder this morning and examine the Passage that has just been read to us- we see that Matthew was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to write down these words concerning those twelve men Jesus has just chosen to be His own private "*Shaliah*"- or what we call, the "*Apostles*". And these men have been *specifically* chosen to go forth in Jesus' Name; preach Jesus'

Message; and to give “*Divine Credibility*” to that Message by performing the very SAME Signs; Wonders; Miracles; Healings; and the casting out of demons that Jesus Himself has been doing for over 1-1/2 years now.

Now some of these men had first been Disciples of John the Baptist. But others had become so amazed at Jesus and what He taught- that they had been following Him for a while. But now- each one of them has been specifically chosen by the incarnate God Himself to be the ones who would form the very Foundation of the Church. And as Jesus began to teach them HOW to conduct their Ministry- they had to be asking themselves the same Question: “*HOW? How in the world are we supposed to do what Jesus is teaching? None of us have been Levitical Priests. None of us has had any formal theological Training. We’re just simple men- just average- every-day people. Yet it sounds like what Jesus has called us to do- is completely impossible! So, how are we going to do this?*”

As I have told you before- the 21 New Testament “*Epistles*” are the “*didactic*” or the “*Teaching Books*” of the New Covenant. These Books tell us what the Worship of God looks like under the auspices of the superior New Covenant; and how we can live our Lives- as “Believers in Jesus”-to God’s Glory. Before the Epistles were written- the “*didactic*” Books under the Old Covenant were the “*Torah*” or the “*Five Books of Moses*”.

The “*Apocrypha*” or the “*Revelation of Jesus Christ*” is the *eschatological* Prophecy of the Victorious Christ and His Church; while the “*Book of the Acts of the Apostles*” is the Diary of the Church- covering its first 30 years. The four “*Gospel Records*” from the four “*Evangelists*” (Matthew; Mark; Luke; and John) contain the historical Facts surrounding the Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and Ascension of Jesus, the Christ.

And these 27 Books concerning the New Covenant were given “*Divine Credibility*” through the performance of supernatural Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and various Gifts from God the Holy Spirit. And now they make up the “*Canon*” or the “*Rule*” of all Christian Belief and Practice; and were added to the 39 Old Covenant Books to give us the ONLY 66 Books on the face of the earth that were “*breathed out*” (inspired) by God.

And in our verse-by-verse “*Journey*” through the **Gospel of Matthew**- we are at the Place just after Jesus has chosen the twelve Apostles and is now in the Process of teaching them HOW to conduct

the very *first* Ministry of the New Covenant. And out of a total of around 3-1/2 years that Jesus was in His earthly Ministry- we have approximately 1-1/2 years remaining until wicked men will nail Jesus to the Cross to murder Him.

Now as I told you at the Beginning of this small mini-series on Jesus teaching the twelve Apostles- everything in the Bible is true and trustworthy. And *some* of what Jesus says here is applicable to ALL Christian Ministry for ALL times. But there are *some* things that Jesus says here in **Matthew 10: 5-42** that pertain ONLY to those specific twelve men at that specific Place and Time in History and is NOT to be applied to our Ministries today.

So, as we rejoin this mini-series this morning- I want to look closely at what Jesus said in verses 9-23. So, let's read verses 9&10 again together:

Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. (Matthew 10:9&10)

Here, Jesus is placing His Apostles into a Position of utter Helplessness for their Support; and for them to rest in the Mercy; and the Sovereignty; and the Provision of God. And Jesus lays out the Principle at the End of 10 when He said,

... for [because] the worker is worthy of his support.

In other words, those who are in Gospel- Ministry and who genuinely give themselves over to their Calling- are *worthy* of Support. They have *earned* what they get. And this says three things:

1. Those in Ministry should give themselves over to their Ministry without any Hesitation- trusting in God to provide
2. Those who support those in Ministry are pleasing to God
3. Those who do not support those in Ministry will be judged by God

The degree to which Support is given to those in Ministry reflects the Value that those people have placed on that Ministry. Little Value is reflected in little Support. Great Value is reflected in great Support.

But in order to understand this Statement by Jesus correctly- I think we have to include the Disposition that the average Jew in the 1st Century had toward Ministry in general. The people were well- aware that the religious Leaders in Israel back in the 1st Century were utterly corrupt. They saw their multiple Divorces and Remarriages. They saw the opulence that the religious Leaders lived and traveled in. They saw the Signs of Hypocrisy and the “double standards” and the Attitude of “*Do what I say- not what I do*” that the Pharisees had. And so, their Disposition toward Ministry in general was both jaded and warped.

And we also have to include the Reality that the streets of Jerusalem were lined with beggars- who sat by the road with their bags opened pleading for people to throw coins into them. And so, Jesus wanted His Apostles to know, on the one hand- they were Worthy of Support; and that people SHOULD give them Support. But on the other hand- Jesus wanted them to also be able to trust in Him for their Support. And so, the Lord did NOT want His Apostles to emulate neither the hypocritical Pharisees nor the Beggars.

Another thing we need to keep in mind is that, initially, Jesus usually sent the Apostles out for very short periods of time. And when He sent them on longer Journeys the Principle concerning their Support changed. So, the Principle of Support we see here in **Matthew 10** was NEVER designed to be permanent. And, toward the End of His Time on earth- Jesus told them to not only provide for themselves- but to also get a sword (**Luke 22:35-41**). Now look at verses 11-15:

11 And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

12 As you enter the house, give it your greeting.

13 If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

14 Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Here is the Teaching about “worthy” and “unworthy” Houses; Cities; Villages; and even people. And the term, “*worthy*” comes from a

Greek word (*axios*; Strong's #514); which has to do with someone or something *deserving* or *earning* a certain Response or Outcome.

So, let's take this one step at a time. Now back in the 1st Century in Israel- visitors to another city did NOT usually stay at an Inn or Hotel. Those places were unclean and filthy; and were known as places where Criminals and Robbers lived and where they robbed, beat, or even murdered the people who would stay there. So, those were very dangerous places.

But it was also an engrained part of Jewish Culture for them to invite strangers into their homes to eat a meal and to spend the night. Today, most people in America refrain from this because of the Fear that strangers may bring harm to them. And sometimes strangers do bring Harm. But in the 1st Century in Israel- any Fear that people might have had to house strangers and feed them was overridden by the greater Fear of displeasing the Lord by NOT allowing strangers to stay the night.

We need to remember that Migration was a very common Issue back then. And people moved around all the time- looking for work; trying to find food; or better housing; or trying to avoid the Consequences of some Sin they had committed. And yet, God through Moses said,

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:21)

We have to understand that staying in one place over a Lifetime- is common only in developed Countries- where there is a stable Government; along with stable Employment; and an abundant Access to both Food and Housing. But War; Famine; economic Disaster; as well as the Judgment of God against various cities and even nations caused millions of people to move around constantly.

So, in 1st Century Israel- people were migrating all the time. And so, it was engrained in the mind of most Jews to welcome strangers into their Homes. But as the New Covenant was received and written down- having a Home where strangers could come and eat and rest became the Standard for Christianity as well. For example, in **1 Timothy 5:10**- one of the Requirements for a Widow Woman to be put on the "List" to

be cared for by the Church was that since her Husband died- she had the Testimony that she...

... has shown hospitality to strangers...

... and then in **Hebrews 13:2**- the unknown writer was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to infallibly teach,

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

... which among other things teaches us that Angels do NOT have wings.

So, Jesus told His Apostles that when they go to a city or village to preach the Gospel- instead of them staying at an Inn or Hotel- they should begin to ask who might be “worthy” in that City or Village.

And this refers to someone who has either *already* experienced the Miracle of the New Birth or someone who is, at the least, *receptive* to the Message of the Kingdom. And Jesus told the Apostles to stay in the House of that person. And this “Worthiness” was understood in two different Ways:

1. The House was “worthy” of a Blessing because they had supported a man, who had been called by God to preach the Gospel
2. The Man, called by God to preach, was “worthy” to be supported by God’s people

But what did Jesus mean when He told the Apostles to give the House that had a “worthy” person it- a “*Greeting*”; and for them to give that House a “*Blessing of Peace*”? This has to do with one more unique Aspect of the “*Apostolic Ministry*” that these men had received from Jesus. Evidently, these twelve men had the “Divine Authority” to issue a “Blessing” or a “Curse” upon a Person; a House; or even an entire City or Village- depending on whether the people of that City; or Home; or that Person was either already born again or was at least *receptive* to the Message of the Kingdom- and was deemed to be “Worthy”.

And this “*Greeting*” was also understood to be a “*Salute*”. In fact, the root word in the Greek from where we get the English word,

“Greeting” or “Salute” is “*aspazomai*” (Strong’s # 782) has to do with a Salute or Greeting. And the main word in this Greeting or Salute is “*Shalom*”- which, in Hebrew, means: “*Peace*”.

Now in the Hebrew language- there is no letter “J” as we have in English. And normally, words that we begin with the letter, “J” began in Hebrew with the letter, “Y”. And so, for example, the City we call, “*Jerusalem*” was called by the Jews, “*Yerushalayim*”- which was a combination of two words: “*Yaru*” which means; “*to found*” or “*to lay a cornerstone*” and “*Shalom*”- which means: “*Peace*”. So, to the ancient Jew- Jerusalem was the “*Foundation of Peace*” or the “*Habitation of Peace*”. So, in addition to Jerusalem being the Capital City of Israel- to the ancient Jew- Jerusalem was the “end all- be all” of the Promises of God. It was where the Temple stood that contained the Ark of the Covenant and was the “*Center-piece*” or the “*Cornerstone*” of the very “*Presence of Almighty God*” (the Shekinah).

In other words, to the ancient Jew- there could be NO Peace at all- unless Jerusalem was truly the “*Habitation of God’s Peace*”. So, more than any other City- Jerusalem was sacred and adored.

But as Jesus brought a decisive End to the Old Covenant; and through His Life; Death; and Resurrection brought in the infinitely superior New Covenant- our Lord promised the Destruction of both Jerusalem itself as well as the Temple that was in Jerusalem. And so, with the Advent of the New Covenant- the Concept of the “*Habitation of Peace*” was transferred *away* from a City (Jerusalem) and was placed on a Person (Jesus Christ). And so, in **The Revelation 11:8** the Apostle John infallibly gave the City of Jerusalem a couple of new names:

... the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

... indicating that God no longer dwells in a single City (be that Jerusalem or Rome) but dwells in the Heart of ALL those who believe and trust in Jesus.

So, a Jew would enter into a City or Village. And because he was a Stranger- he would be approached by the Elders of that City so they could determine if his Visit was peaceful or threatening. And so, the Stranger would calm things down by saying, “*Peace upon you*” (Shalom Aleichem). And the Elders would then know his visit was NOT

threatening. But then, after his visit- as he was leaving that City- the Elders would then give him the same Blessing, “*Peace upon you*” or “*May God be with you*” or even “*God be with you*”.

And that “*Greeting*” and “*Blessing of Peace*” was common. For example, in **1Samuel 25:5b&6-** David told the young men,
... Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; and thus you shall say, ‘Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.

And in one of his “*Songs of Ascents*” (**Psalm 122**) David wrote this in verses 6-9:

**6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you.
7 “May peace be within your walls, And prosperity within your palaces.”
8 For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, “May peace be within you.”
9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.**

But the initial “*Blessing of Peace*” was NOT always relegated to people. For example, when Angels would greet people- they would almost always say,

“Do not fear...”

... which was the same “*Blessing of Peace*” from a negative position.
So, for example, in **Daniel 10:19b-** the Angel told Daniel,

O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you ...

... which was this same “*Blessing of Peace*” from both a positive and negative Position.

Now over the Centuries, in the English- speaking Nations- that departing “Blessing” of “*God be with ye*” was later contracted to simply be, “*Goodbye*”. But then in verses 13b& 14- Jesus said,

... But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

So, to every City, Village, House, or Person that the Apostles met as they went out to preach the Gospel- they either gave that “Greeting” and “Blessing of Peace” or they took it back. So, the Apostles made a Judgment to determine if that City, Village, House, or Person was “Worthy” of the “Blessing of Peace”. And if it was- they freely gave it. But if it wasn’t- they took that “Blessing of Peace” and that “Greeting” or “Salute” back.

Now the Act of shaking the dust off the feet was symbolic of the Reality that the Apostles had done all they could to bring the glorious Gospel to that City, Village, Home, or Person- but they had *rejected* both the Apostles themselves as well as the Gospel- and the Apostles were now leaving that City or that Home or that Person to themselves- to be judged by God.

Now we should read between the lines here and NOT see this as rigid as it seems to be on the surface. I can understand doing this on a “one-on-one” Basis. So, if one Person rejects the Gospel- then we should do what Jesus says here- to that one individual. But even at that- we should *always* “leave the door open” and “leave the Light on”- and *continue* to pray for that lost soul- in the Hope that this individual may “come to his senses” later on- and repent.

But we should NOT “shake the dust of our feet off” to an entire City- unless we have gone to every single Person in that City *first*- and experienced EVERY ONE OF THEM- rejecting the Gospel. Because simply because one Person or even one Home in a particular City has rejected the Message of the Kingdom doesn’t mean that everybody else in that City has also rejected it.

We should obey what Jesus said here- yes! But in obeying our Lord- we MUST ALWAYS err on the side of Mercy. Dear friends, we MUST always know that showing Mercy is NEVER wrong! Loving people is NEVER wrong! When Mercy and Love become sinful in our eyes- we are as far away from God as we can get. Now by saying that I do NOT mean compromising with Sin. But giving lost Sinners more than one Opportunity to repent- is NOT compromising. Because how many of us came to Jesus the first time we heard the Gospel? I would guess very few.

So, here- Jesus was telling His Apostles that where they were received with Joy- they should stay and teach. But where their Message was rejected- they had no further Responsibility. They were free to walk

away with a clear Conscience- knowing they had done all they could do. Shaking the dust off their feet was, in effect, saying that those who rejected God's Truth would not be allowed to hinder the Furtherance of the Gospel. And even the Dust of those Cities that rejected the Lord was an Abomination and would not be allowed to cling to the feet of God's Messengers.

Now some would say, *"Oh, Brother Blair, there you go getting all mystical on us. This 'Greeting' and this 'Blessing of Peace' was simply a cultural Expression of Love- but it had no real Power to actually bring about a Blessing or a Curse."* Is that so? Well, then how do you explain what Jesus said next in verse:

Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. (Matthew 10:15)

... no, this was a very real; very Powerful; and very serious thing. Jesus said that God will have MORE Mercy on Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than He will on a Person; or a Home; or a City or Village that has consistently and clearly rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ! So, this is way beyond a mere *"Cultural Expression of Love"*. This has to do with Apostolic Authority to either Bless or Curse a Person; a Home; or an entire City based on their Acceptance or Rejection of the Message of the Kingdom. But now look at verses 16-22:

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

17 But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

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

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.

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.

22 You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

Now this is just one more Place where Jesus promises that Persecution is “part and parcel” to every genuine Ministry of the Gospel. If God has called you to preach His Word- you WILL suffer Persecution. In fact, Jesus has promised EVERY genuine Believer that they WILL be persecuted.

But there are a few signs in this Passage that tell us that this particular Passage in **Matthew 10** was for the Apostles in the 1st Century- ALONE. For example, look at what Jesus said in verses 17&18:

17 But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

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

Now back in the 1st Century in Israel- the Romans cruelly *dominated* all of daily Life- except for religious Matters. The Romans normally allowed the Jewish Rulers to deal with Issues like false Teaching; and Heresy; as well as the Explanation of the Hebrew Bible.

But here, Jesus said that the Apostles would be scourged (beaten) in “**their Synagogues**”. I know of no Christian today who is scourged or beaten in a Jewish Synagogue for preaching the Gospel. And one of the main reasons for that- is NOT because the Jews wouldn’t *want* to beat some Christins- but simply because the Jews have NO Authority to do so.

Christians are persecuted all over the world today; and are *routinely* beaten; and imprisoned; and tortured; and martyred; at the hands of evil men. But they are NOT usually beaten in Jewish Synagogues- which is what Jesus spoke.

Now I have told you the History of “Synagogues” as well as the Pharisees; and how God NEVER revealed them to Moses in the 39 Books of the Old Testament. Both the Pharisees as well as the entire Concept of Synagogues are a fabricated; Man-made; unbiblical Concept that was invented by sinful religious Hypocrites during the “*400 years of Silence*” in between the “*Burden*” of Malachi and the Angel Gabriel appearing to John the Baptist’s Father.

And here in the United States in 2025- there are approximately 3,700 Synagogues; while world-wide there are around 19,000. But as of

this morning- there is NO Temple in Jerusalem. And that has been true now for over 2,000 years. But as far as my Research has taken me- no Christian has been physically beaten in a Jewish Synagogue for Preaching the Gospel- since the Apostles back in the 1st Century.

Secondly, look again at verse 18:

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

Now the fact that Jesus said, **“and to the Gentiles”** at the End of this verse indicates that the “Governors” and “Kings” He was referring to were either completely *Jewish* or that they were a combination of both Jews and Gentiles. Because if this was referring to various Kings and Governors all around the world- who persecute Christian Missionaries every day in the 21st Century- ALL of those Rulers would be “Gentile” by default. But by adding the phrase, **“and to the Gentiles”** at the End of this verse tells us that the Rulers that Jesus promised His Apostles that they would be brought before- were Jewish.

And again, the ONLY way that could happen is if the Jews had various Governors and Kings- who ruled over entire Sections of Israel back in the 1st Century.

According to the Encyclopedia Britanica- in Israel in the 1st Century- there were MANY Jewish Governors and even Kings, who ruled over sections of Territory and were “puppet kings” who swore Allegiance to the Roman Government. The largest of these Territories were ruled by the Herodians, who were known for their Cruelty toward the Christians.

But look again at what Jesus said was God’s Will concerning this,

... as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

So, the Reason God desired that the Apostles in the 1st Century would be *forcefully* brought before the Jewish Governors and Kings as well as before the Rulers who were Gentiles- was **“as a Testimony to them”**. But why would God do that? God wants His Message to be preached to the entire World for two Reasons:

1. So those, who are chosen for Salvation, will hear and believe and receive God's Grace/Mercy
2. So those who are NOT chosen- will hear and reject and receive God's Justice

... and even though we are primarily concerned about the ones who will believe and receive God's Grace/Mercy- God is concerned that BOTH the "Glory of His Grace/Mercy" as well as the "Glory of His Justice" are displayed and seen and marveled at.

So, there are Times, when God sovereignly *allows* what He hates. And so, periodically, God *allows* evil men to scourge His people- so that His people will be able to witness to those evil men. Why because some of those evil men are chosen for Salvation! And this is why Paul told his "son in the Faith" Timothy this in **1 Timothy 2:1&2a**

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority...

... and then look at verse 4:

... who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

... which should be understood to say,

... who desires all [sorts of] men [even evil kings] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

So, God wants us to pray for Rulers- even *evil* Rulers- because it is God's Will that some of them will be saved! And God has done that throughout all History by allowing His people to be martyred at the hands of evil Rulers- for a "Testimony" to either bring them to Salvation or to damn them.

But one of the surest Reasons we have to say that what Jesus said here in this Passage was *primarily* for the Apostles back in the 1st Century ONLY- is what Jesus said in verse 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.

Now as the Jewish Believers that Jesus had just chosen to be His Apostles heard Jesus say these words- what were they thinking? One of the things we must understand is that when a 21st Century American Christian hears or reads the word, “*Coming*” concerning Jesus- he immediately thinks about the *2nd Coming of Jesus back to this earth*. And there is good reason for that- because we believe and we teach about the “*Imminent Return*” of Jesus back to this earth.

In other words, we believe so strongly that Jesus is coming back- that we *earnestly* pray- as John did in **The Revelation 22:20**:

... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

... so, we believe in the 2nd Coming of Jesus. And we teach it; and we pray about it; and periodically, we even fast for it to be soon!

But we also realize that NOT every place where the word, “*Coming*” is found in the New Testament is talking about the 2nd Coming. That is simply taking those parts of the Bible completely out of Context.

The most common Understanding that a Jew back in the 1st Century had about the idea of the Lord’s “Coming”- was God “coming” to judge faithless and sinful Israel. Why? Because God did just that- over and over and over again- all throughout the 39 Books of the Old Testament!

And that is *precisely* what Jesus is talking about here in **Matthew 10:23**. He was NOT talking about His 2nd Coming. “*But how do you know that- Brother Blair?*” Because the Apostles, as well as the early Believers, (who were almost all Jewish) were able to go through ALL of the cities of Israel to flee from Persecution- BEFORE the 1st Century ever ended!

So, this particular “Coming” that Jesus refers to here in verse 23 is Him coming to judge those who absolutely *should have* embraced Jesus as their Messiah- but who *categorically* rejected Him! And His Promise that the Apostles would NOT be able to go through all the cities of Israel until that happened- came to pass- when God sovereignly raised up the Roman army to ride in “from the North” around 38 years

from the very Moment Jesus spoke these words- to utterly *decimate* Jerusalem as well as the Temple.

And by doing that- God proved beyond any doubt that He was forever finished with the Temple in Jerusalem; along with the Levitical Priests; the Sanhedrin Court; the sacrifice of animals; and the dietary and ceremonial Aspects of the Law of Moses! And through the Life; Death; and Resurrection of the sinless Lamb of God- Jesus, the Christ- the infinitely superior New Covenant has *replaced* the Old; and the Old Covenant Way of the Worship of God has been replaced with the Way of the New!

I tell you that the Apostles were very common and ordinary men, who were called to accomplish a very important and unordinary Mission. And if anyone SHOULD have failed- these men SHOULD have failed. But they DIDN'T fail! They accomplished EVERYTHING Jesus called them to do! And that Truth should stagger us.

But it should also *empower* us to believe that since they were able to do what God called them to do- we can do what God has called us to do! And because they did NOT fail- we don't have to fail, either! And because we are now in Union with Jesus Christ- we may also "do all things through Christ who strengthens us!"

Amen! Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

