

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 128- Jesus Instructs the Apostles- Part 5 The Household will Receive what is Given to the Head of the House

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Matthew 10:24-39

24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;

36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

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

There are several Reasons why people go into the Ministry. Some go for financial Gain. Some go into Ministry because they feel pressured by somebody else. Others enter the Ministry because they are hungry for Fame; while still others go into Christian Ministry because they have a desire to “*set everybody straight*”; or to “*tell everybody off*”.

And those who enter the Ministry for Reasons like this- not only do NOT glorify God; they not only do NOT bring Honor and Praise to Jesus Christ; they not only eventually leave the Ministry because things didn’t work out for them-but they also leave in their wake- a literal “Sea” of hurt; defeated; and disillusioned people- that require a Miracle to ever get them back into Church.

There is ONLY one single Reason why anyone should ever go into the Ministry: Because Almighty God has sovereignly called and chosen them for this Task. So, from that perspective- everybody, who is in the Ministry today, who has been genuinely called and chosen by God to be there- is like the Apostles.

Peter did NOT call himself to the Ministry of an Apostle. John did NOT have an innate Desire to show everybody else where they were wrong. Paul did NOT enter the Ministry for Fame nor Fortune. And the man, whose inspired Book we are “*journeying through*”- Matthew (Levi)- did NOT feel Pressure from somebody else to function in the Office of an Apostle.

Every single Apostle was busy doing something else when Jesus sovereignly *called* them and said, “*Follow Me!*”. They all had Plans that Jesus *interrupted*. They had their entire Futures mapped out- when Jesus sovereignly *inserted* Himself into their Lives. They were engaged in other Occupations; and had given themselves over to whatever they were doing- when this itinerate Preacher approached them with the most fantastic Tale they had ever heard, “*I am God. I am the long- awaited Messiah; I am the One David talked about in Psalm 110:1:*

The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

But NONE of them, besides Paul, had been a Pharisee. And NONE, besides Paul had any formal spiritual Training. These men were illiterate and hot-headed Fisherman; heartless Tax Collectors, who imposed *confiscatory* Taxes on the Jewish people- so Rome could prosper; unmerciful and brutal Terrorists, who engaged in Kidnapping; Extortion; and Murder- all in the Name of delivering the Promised Land back to the Jews; and everything in between. So, these were hardly men, who were prepared to be the personal “*Shaliah*” to the Lord Christ; and who, along with the Old Testament Prophets, would become the very Foundation of the Christian Church (**Ephesians 2:20**).

As I have told you many time- if *anyone* in the more than 2,000 History of the Church *should* have failed in their Mission- it was the Apostles. These men had NONE of the “Tools” or “Helps” that we have today. There were NO theological Seminaries and NO Christian Libraries. The Apostles were just *simple* and *ordinary* men- very *common* men- all of whom were wicked Sinners- who were called to a very *unique* and *uncommon* and *unrepeatable* Calling!

As these men entered the Office of Apostle- it would be another 1700 years before Matthew Henry would write his well-known and well- loved Commentary on the whole Bible; and 100 years more than that- until Dr. Strong produced his famous Concordance. So, these men were trained by the incarnate God Himself! And their Training consisted of three different Forms:

1. **General Training** “out in the field” with real Problems and real Situations
2. **Intense Training** immediately after Jesus called them to the Office of Apostle (**Matthew 10**).
3. **Intense Training** for 40 Days immediately after the Resurrection of Jesus (**The Acts 1:3**)

The “General Training” consisted of a series on ongoing Teaching where the Apostles were confronted with real-Life Situations- so they could learn how to apply the Truth of Jesus’ Teaching into their Ministry. The 1st Season of Intensive Training is what we are covering now in our “Journey” through **Mattew 10**. And the final Time of Intense Training for the Apostles was after the Resurrection of Jesus- where the Lord had to correct the false Understanding of “Last Things” (Eschatology) that the Apostles had been taught by the Pharisees before their Conversion. This Training centered on Jesus helping these men *abandon* the false Teaching about the Future of the natural Kingdom of Israel- so they could fully *embrace* the correct Teaching about the Church and the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

So, from that Perspective- no other Group of Ministers in all of Church History have had this kind of “one-on-one” Teaching directly from Jesus Himself.

Yet, one thing that we have that these men did NOT have- is we have EVERYTHING these men wrote down- the New Testament- which NONE of the Apostles had in their Entirety during their Lives!

And yet these men did NOT fail! The Apostles *successfully* obeyed the Lord Christ; and were used by God to receive; articulate and write down (or have written down) the inspired; inerrant; and infallible 27 Books of the New Testament- which are the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man. The Apostles also *confirmed* the Divine Inspiration of those 27 Books with Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and Gifts of the Holy Spirit. And then they correctly interpreted the Old Testament. And by doing all of that- the Apostles- single-handedly- help to bring the Age of the Old Covenant and Jewish Worship to a decisive End while literally *establishing* Christianity on the earth! And that is why, combined with the Old Testament Prophets- the Apostles became the very Foundation of the Christian Church (**Ephesians 2:20**)!

Today, we have literally tens of thousands of Teachers to lean on; a wealth of Books; Sermons; Commentaries; and other written Tools to help us to understand the Bible correctly. But we also have the advantage of 2,000 years of Church History- both Good and Bad- and 6,000 years of human Life on earth that teach us both what to do and what NOT to do. So, those of us in Ministry today have NO Reason at all to fail. And yet, people, who lay claim to be called by God into the Ministry in our Day are leaving the Ministry in droves; or they are being *forced* out- due to Sin and what they call, “Burn-out”!

So, it is appropriate that we should be in Awe of these Apostles. And it is also appropriate that, even though we are equally saved; and redeemed; and forgiven; and made Righteous; and adopted; into the Family of God as they were- we acknowledge we have NOT been called and do NOT hold the same Office as they did. And so, as we go over the Teaching that Jesus gave to those twelve men here in **Matthew 10**- there will be some Areas that we may apply to our own Lives and Ministry. But the bulk of what Jesus taught here does NOT pertain to us and pertains ONLY to the Apostles and their Ministry! So, please keep that in mind as we move through this amazing Teaching.

Now, today, I want us to concentrate of the Reality that Jesus instructed those twelve men that whatever kind of Treatment the people gave to Jesus- as the Head of the Household- that this is how the people of the Household will be treated. So, let’s read verses 24&25 again together:

**24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.
25 It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!**

Here, Jesus is teaching a “spiritual Principle” concerning Teachers and their Disciples. And that Principle is that a Disciple CANNOT rise above his Teacher. The Disciple of a Teacher can ONLY go as high; he can ONLY become as “spiritual”; or as “godly”- as his Teacher is. And that is true because if a Disciple rises his Teacher- then the Teacher is no longer teaching him; and the Disciple has now become the Teacher. So, by default, a Teacher must ALWAYS lead. A Man called as a Teacher in the Church of Jesus must ALWAYS “set the pace” in his own Walk with God; his own Prayer Life; his own Relationship with Jesus; his own Time in the Study of God’s Word; his own bearing of godly Fruit; his own pursuit of Holiness; and his own Willingness to suffer for the Sake of Jesus Christ.

So, as great as the Apostles were; as great as some other Pastors and Teachers throughout Church History have been- in Relation to Jesus- the Leaders of the Church are ALWAYS *under* Jesus. There is NO such thing as anyone, who is called into the Ministry- being *higher* than or *above* Jesus- or even *as high* as Jesus. Jesus leads and we follow. So, ALL Ministers MUST bow before King Jesus. Because ALL who lead in the Christian Church are *subservient* to the Head of the Church- Jesus Christ!

And this is just another reason to *categorically* reject the Office of Pope in the Roman “religious System”. This fraud and Imposter holds himself out as being the “*physical, literal, and earthy, Embodiment*” (vicar) of Jesus Himself!¹ And this is why everybody, who has been deceived by that wayward and unbiblical System bows down to the Pope and MUST obey him!

But then, in verse 25- Jesus got very specific about the Context that He was talking about when He said,

... If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

... so, the Context that Jesus was referring to in this Passage- was very narrowly about the MIS-TREATMENT that the members of the Household (the Church) would receive by others. As people, who began our Lives as great Sinners; totally separated from God; children of satan; and who were, “by nature, children of God’s Wrath” (**Ephesians 2:3**); and fully DESERVING of an eternity in Hell- we should NEVER think we *deserve* or are *entitled to better* Treatment than which Jesus Himself received.

Jesus was sinlessly Perfect; and yet, He was mistreated *horribly* during His Time here on earth. And so, those who have been called and chosen to be a part of

¹ <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15401a.htm>

the “Son’s Household” (**Hebrews 3:6**)- should NOT expect to be treated *better* than the “Head” of that Household- Jesus Christ. So, Persecution; Trouble; Tumults; Afflictions; Trials; and Tests for the members of Christ’s Household are both NORMAL and CORRECT. They are to be expected. Because these things indicate that God has caused us to be born again; and has adopted us into His Family.

The Anomaly is how Christians are treated here in the United States. For over 240 years- Christianity; the Christian Church; and individual Christians have been honored; and respected; and admired; and protected; and promoted; given special Treatment (tax exempt status) that genuine Blood-bought Believers in other Nations have NEVER enjoyed for a single Day. And until recently, our Persecution has usually consisted in other people simply *talking* about us or *abandoning* us. But that may all change in the Future. And if it does- it will NOT be Time for the so-called “Rapture”- it will be Time for American Christians to follow Jesus; and to learn to be faithful under the very SAME harsh and brutal Conditions that all the other Christians have *always* endured.

Every single Day that the Apostles were on the earth- Christianity was an *illegal* and *persecuted* Religion. So, in addition to being talked about and ostracized- the Apostles were routinely arrested; tried; convicted; imprisoned; had their goods confiscated; and were martyred. Beatings and being Scourged were common-place- even when they were released. But look what Jesus said about this in verses 26-33:

26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

This Passage contains both Commandments as well as Promises and Warnings to the Apostles from Jesus Himself. And the Commandments are as follows:

- **do not fear them** (the ones who will mistreat them) (v. 26)
- **What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light** (v. 27)
- **what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops** (v. 27)
- **Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul** (v. 28)
- **but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** (v. 28)
- **So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows** (v. 31)

... and the Promises are...

- **there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.** (v. 26)
- **And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father... But the very hairs of your head are all numbered... you are more valuable than many sparrows.** (v. 29, 30, &31)
- **everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.** (v. 32)

... and then Jesus gave the Apostles (and us) a very serious Warning:

whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. (v. 33)

Now the word, “**deny**” in verse 33 is the *opposite* of the word, “**confess**” in verse 32. The word, “**confess**” comes from a Greek word, (*homologeo*; Strong’s # 3670) and means: *to acknowledge; to profess; and to be in accord with someone or something*. So, in this Context, to “*deny Jesus*” before men is to NOT “*confess a Belief in; an Acceptance of; and to be in Accord with*” Jesus. And this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote this in **Romans 10:9**:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

... and in **Philippians 2:11**:

and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

... and what the Apostle John meant when he wrote this in **1John 4:3**

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

We must remember that we are saved by what we believe in; what we accept; and what we confess and NOT by what we do. All of the “doing” in Christianity comes after we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; repented of Sin; believed the Gospel; and have been justified and adopted. So, in the language of the Bible- the “Christian Faith”; the “Christian Religion”; or the “Religion of Jesus”- is something we “Confess”. And, in the Bible, the Religion itself is called our “Confession”. And that is what the various writers were talking about when they said,

2Corinthians 9:13

Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,

1Timothy 3:16

By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

1Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1Timothy 6:13

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

Hebrews 4:14

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Jesus promised the Apostles that their Life, after assuming their Office, was going to be very Hard and filled with Trouble; Persecution; Afflictions; Trials; and Tests. And Jesus told them they would be arrested; tried; falsely accused; condemned; beaten; and killed. Most American Christians have NEVER and will NEVER go through any of this. But ALL of the Apostles did. And besides John- every single one of the Apostles were brutally martyred for the Faith. Now they tried several Times to kill John- but the man simply wouldn't die- so, it wasn't their Fault that their Efforts to kill John failed.

Now sadly, there are people in this World, who take what Jesus said in verses 30&31:

... the very hairs of your head are all numbered... So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows

... and over in **Luke 21:18:**

... not a hair of your head will perish.

... and they teach that because ALL the Apostles were martyred- that Jesus told them a Lie.

It is very Important for Christian Teachers and Preachers, to take Issues like this with utter Seriousness. So often we quote Promises in the Bible which, on their face, seem unrealistic at best and untrue at worst. Yet, sadly, many Times, Teachers and Preachers never give a plausible Explanation of how those Promises are to be understood and realistically hoped in. So, we need a heavy dose of Realism whenever we embrace Promises like this.

For Example, the very first Commandment that is connected to a Promise from God is the 5th Commandment in **Exodus 20:12** that says,

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

... yet we know that NOT ALL who honor their Parents live long and full Lives. Some, who truly honor their Parents, die very young while others die under horrible Conditions or with terrible Sicknesses. Also, please notice that the Promise of prolonged Life was connected to, **“the land which the Lord God gives you”**, which means it ONLY applied to the ancient Jew.

But the Context of this Promise has to do with how the Jew viewed Life back in the ancient World and NOT how we view Life in our Day. The average Lifespan of a Jew in the ancient world (AFTER the Flood and 1500 years BEFORE Jesus was born) was around 50-60 years. And that short Life was very harsh and cruel. Few had running water; food was scarce; and medical Treatment was very primitive. People back then died from infected sores in their mouths- as dental care was non-existent. And so, to live a “prolonged Life” in that setting would have been 60-70 years of a harsh and rugged Life- which we would consider to NOT be a Blessing at all in our Day.

So, the term, “Long-Life” to an ancient Jew was synonymous with being blessed by God. And the Concept of being “blessed by God” was almost ALWAYS taken in a *spiritual* Sense- and NOT that the individual would have lots of Land; Livestock and many Possessions. One Group in the Bible that was considered to be “blessed and highly favored” by God is found in **Hebrew 10:32-34** that says,

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

This unknown Group had EVERYTHING unjustly (and possibly illegally) taken from them by evil people. And yet the writer said that they,

... accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

... and 2,000 years later this Group is mentioned in the Holy Bible as a Group that had great Faith and was blessed by God!

Likewise, Jesus was NOT saying that a genuine Christian would never starve or suffer or always have everything he needed to sustain Life. History is crystal clear that many devoted Followers of Jesus died

under terrible Circumstances. But hair doesn't "perish" in the first place. And we also have to acknowledge that many saved men are completely bald and don't have any hair at all. So, what gives? Can we trust the Promises that Jesus gave or not?

Yes, we can absolutely trust the Promises that Jesus gave us- but ONLY in their correct Context. Every single one of the Apostles suffered horrible Deaths- except John- and he was boiled in oil and banished to an island to starve to death. I don't have any idea how many of the Apostles were bald- but it is possible that some were. So, how are we to understand what Jesus meant by what He said? In these verses, Jesus was speaking *figuratively* about the Condition of the eternal Souls of genuine Believers. And He was encouraging the men, that He knew were going to suffer and be killed, that even if evil men hurt them in this Life- they CANNOT touch their Souls! And that Promise is Good for all of us today! And this is what Paul meant when he said this in **2Corinthians 4:17**:

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

Now the "**momentary, light Affliction**" the Apostle was referring to here is what he described over in **2Corinthians 11:24-27**:

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

... things we would consider as barbaric Treatment.

So, Paul was NOT saying that his personal Afflictions were easy; or that they didn't affect him very much; or that they didn't hurt; or that they were very simple; and not Life-threatening. When he said his Afflictions were "Momentary"- he meant that they were ONLY for this Life; and as soon as he died- ALL those Afflictions would stop. And when he said his Beatings and Imprisonments; and the Scourging; and the terrible Treatment he endured were "Light"- he was NOT being brave or tough and he was NOT trying to show how courageous he was. Those Beatings really hurt him- in fact, they almost killed him. And Paul suffered from the Results of that Treatment until his head was cut off.

No, the Apostle said here his Afflictions were “Light” because of what he also said in **Romans 8:18**:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now look closely at the words of verse 26:

Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

Now we take this to mean that we are NOT to fear ANYONE who may persecute us. But *why* did Jesus say,

... there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

In Context- Jesus is referring specifically here to the Pharisees. Because above all the other Groups of Jews combined- including the pagan Roman Occupiers- the Pharisees were the MOST hostile to Jesus and His Followers.

So, Jesus is referring here to two things:

1. The Teaching that Jesus is giving to the Apostles in Secret now- will one day be broadcast loudly around the world
2. The Hypocrisy and false Teaching of the Pharisees that, at that time, was mostly kept quiet- would be exposed for all the world to see

It will not be very much longer in our verse-by-verse “Journey” through **Matthew** until we see the frightening and cataclysmic Judgment that will be Promised in great detail by the Lamb of God against the Pharisees. This Judgment will be so complete that in **Matthew 23:33**- Jesus said specifically to the Pharisees,

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

... and then in **Matthew 23:34-36** the incarnate God said this to these religious Hypocrites:

**34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,
35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.
36 Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**

... and true to His Word in just under 40 years from the Day Jesus spoke these very words, He fulfilled His Promise by “Coming” to faithless and unbelieving Israel in the “Clouds of Glory”- in the Fury of His Just Wrath. And God used the pagan Roman Army in 70 AD. to utterly destroy them. He tore down their Temple; eliminated the Levitical Priesthood; abolished the Sanhedrin Court; stopped animal Sacrifices; and ended forever the Jewish Way of Worship that has lasted to this very Day! Now please look again at verse 34:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

People in other Nations do NOT kill Christian Missionaries because they dig them wells; or teach them how to farm effectively; or because they educate them; or because they build Hospitals and treat them for free. No, they admire Christians for doing those things. And the Elite, here in America, do NOT despise and mock Christians because we build Schools for the blind; or because we feed the hungry; and house the homeless; and clothe the naked; or teach them skills that will help them in this Life. Likewise, Christians are praised for doing those things.

Missionaries are hated and routinely beaten; tortured; imprisoned; and killed all around the World because they compel the pagans of those Nations to completely *abandon* their false religions; *turn from* their barbaric Practices; *repent* of Sin; and fully *embrace* the Lord Jesus Christ and begin to obey ALL that God the Holy Spirit has spoken in sacred Scripture!

Likewise, here in America, Christians are mocked and despised because we love Sinners enough to call them out of their wicked Ways; and to embrace Jesus; and strive to obey Him- lest they die in their Sins and be cast into a devil’s Hell.

So, it is Who Jesus is and What Jesus said that offends them. And so, because the primary Calling of the Apostles (as well as ALL Ministers) is to herald the glorious Gospel that defines Who Jesus is and What Jesus said- Jesus knew that this Reality would NOT bring a universal Peace to all people but would cause Turmoil and would be the very Source of the Persecution.

Make no mistake about it- both Jesus and Christianity are *extremely* Exclusive. Jesus boldly proclaimed that He and He alone was the one, single Path or Way to God the Father (**John 14:6**). He said that *anyone*- Jew or Buddhist or Muslim or Hindu or Taoist- who tries to get into Heaven apart from Him was a **“Thief and a Robber” (John 10:1)**. Scripture teaches that all sincere Muslims; all devout Jews; all honest Buddhists; and every Follower of every one of the world’s Religions are Lost and headed for Hell. The Bible clearly and repeatedly says that ALL of the many Religions in the entire World are all wrong and do NOT have the Power to forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. And that is patently offensive and insulting to those who have NOT embraced Jesus Christ.

But most Unbelievers just walk off and ignore the Pleas of the Preacher to repent and believe. But every once in a while, some Unbelievers get violent; and will do much harm to those who herald the Gospel. And with the Apostles- that happened more than it didn’t. And then in verses 35&36 Jesus told those twelve men that this Offense would even impact their immediate Families:

For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

Here, Jesus quoted from **Micah 7:6** to affirm to the Apostles that this is the very SAME Treatment that the Old Testament Prophet endured. So, the intense Persecution against the Apostles- even among their own immediate Families did NOT begin with the Apostles. And it didn’t end with the Apostles, either. Even today, even in America, it is NOT uncommon for Christians to be cast out of their Homes; to be blacklisted; disinherited; persecuted; and forcibly removed from Families because of their Love and Devotion to Jesus. But again, this was exactly what happened to Jesus. Back in **Luke 4**- Jesus preached 1-1/2 verses of **Isaiah 61** and Jesus’ own Family- his Aunts and Uncles and Cousins were so offended that they tried to throw Him off a cliff!

But even though this is very painful- Jesus gave the Apostles (and us) a serious Warning about this in verse 37:

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Our Love for Jesus and His Word MUST be Paramount. We cannot love anything or anyone MORE or even the SAME as we love Jesus. Because if we do- we are proving that we are NOT worthy to be in Heaven with Him!

But this Warning also applies to ourselves as well. And so, in verse 38 Jesus said,

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Now this is a verse that tells us that Jesus was talking, *primarily* to the Apostles and NOT to us. The “cross” that Jesus was talking about here is a literal Cross used in Crucifixion. During the Time of Jesus and the Apostles, over 30,000 human beings were crucified just in the region around Jerusalem by the Romans! So, Jesus was NOT the only One who was crucified. In fact, during that time-frame- Crucifixion was the single most common method of capital Punishment in the Roman Empire.

“*Crucifixion*” or “*Impalement*”, in one form or another, was used by the Persians, the Carthaginians, and among some of the ancient Greeks. The Greek writer, “Herodotus”, described the Execution of a Persian General at the hands of the Athenians in 479BC as follows,

“They nailed him to a plank and hung him up until he died”².

Roman physicians discovered the “medial nerve” and *perfected* Crucifixion as NOT merely a method of Execution but as a Method of cruel Torture as the nails would be placed on that nerve to inflict maximum Pain.

The Condemned would have his arms extended with nails in each wrist or tied with rope to hold them firm in a horizontal position. A single spike would be driven through both feet as the knees were slightly bent. So, as the person would breathe in- he couldn’t exhale unless he relieved the body weight on his arms. So, to try to breathe out- the condemned would push up on the single spike in his feet. But the spike rested on the medial nerve; and the pain was so severe that he couldn’t keep it up. So, he would sag back down with his full body weight on both arms.

This process continued until the person’s legs who was being Crucified were broken- so he was no longer able to exhale. That’s why the soldiers went around to break the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. So, a man, who was crucified actually suffocated. And the Reputation of this horrific Punishment sent chills down the spine of the Jews.

There really isn’t a good Way to be murdered. But Crucifixion was the *worst*. And so, here- Jesus is preparing His Apostles for what might actually and literally happen to them. And again, this is NOT about who can be brave- this is about loving Jesus more than your own Life.

² *Histories*; ix; p. 120-122

But many times, when American Christians read this verse- we apply it to ourselves as meaning that we are to carry the “cross” of our unsaved loved ones; or the “cross” of a chronic Illness; or the “cross” of financial Struggles; or a “cross” of some other Hardship. And it is Good for all of us to be willing to persevere in our Love for Jesus- no matter what. But that is simply NOT what Jesus was talking about here.

But another Factor that weighs into this is that it is simply out of Place for any Christian, who lives in 21st Century America, to die by Crucifixion. Firstly, it is against the Law and against the Constitution’s Prohibition of “cruel and unusual” Punishment. We get sued over here. We get fined. We lose Lawsuits. We get ostracized. And we get verbal attacks along with the occasional physical assault. But in 1st Century Israel- Crucifixion was NOT uncommon. On any given day- a Jew could walk down the streets of Jerusalem and see several dead bodies hung on crosses all along the side of the road- as well as hear the cries of those who had not yet died. It was truly barbaric; and it was truly frightening. And then Jesus spoke what is recorded in verse 39:

He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus told His Apostles that those who have their Lives all planned out; who live to themselves; and who think they have no Need for Forgiveness from a merciful Savior- will *lose* their eternal Souls. But those who lose their natural and physical Lives in humble Obedience to Jesus- will possess eternal Life!

So, Jesus is preparing the men He chose to be Apostles for the very Rugged and very Rewarding Life in joyful and humble Service to Him. So, their Ministry is NOT going to be a weekend Hobby. This Calling will consume these men for the rest of their Lives as they “blaze the Trail” of what Christian Ministry really should be about!

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!