



## The Gospel of Matthew - Chapter Ten

### Summary of Chapter Ten

Jesus called twelve of his disciples into apostleship, giving them the authority to drive out evil spirits and to cure people of the same sicknesses and physical impairments that he had been demonstrating during his ministry so far.

Once chosen, Jesus instructed them for their mission to the local Jewish population, telling them where they should visit, how they should conduct themselves, what they should take and what they were required to achieve.

Jesus revealed that all disciples will face severe persecution and testing during their earthly life. This is to be expected and they are called to withstand whatever the world may put up against them, to the point of death.

They are told that they need not fear those who persecute them or indeed anyone else for the worst a human can do is to physically abuse and kill a person in this life. All of mankind should fear God for he has the power over everyone's soul, their eternal future, which is ultimately what life is about.

In fact, Jesus went so far as to say that it is his First Coming that was the root cause of so much strife and trouble in life, with strong opposition to be faced as polar groups form from those who choose to follow Jesus and those who reject him and the Gospel message he came to proclaim.

Those who do hold fast and do act appropriately towards all others under Kingdom guidelines and principles will be rewarded when the appropriate time comes. The ultimate prize is eternal life with Christ.

### **VI. Matthew 10:1-11:1 - The Authoritative Mission of the Messiah's Messengers (Second Discourse)**

This second major discourse of Jesus focuses on the disciples' mission to Israel (vv.1-15), preparation for a worldwide mission among the Gentiles (vv.16-23), and the characteristics that Jesus' disciples will need to embody as they carry out that mission (vv.24-42).

Jesus prepares his disciples, whom he expects to further propagate the message of the Kingdom. Just as Jesus carried on John's message, so too will his disciples continue with his. His followers must expand on his mission of healing because the labourers are so few.

In this chapter Matthew records the words of Jesus, like those in the Sermon on the Mount, not for merely historical interest but to encourage fellow disciples throughout the period between the First and Second Comings of Jesus.

#### VI.a Matthew 10:1-15 - Commissioning and instructions for the short-term mission to Israel

Jesus commissions (vv.1-4) and instructs (vv.5-15) the Twelve, sending them out with his message and power.

##### VI.a.i Matthew 10:1-4 - The Twelve Apostles

By now, Jesus had quite a large number of followers. From them he chose twelve as apostles, who would be trained to build the early church after his departure from earth. He provided them with all authority over demons and illnesses.

**<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.**

#### Matthew 10:1

Jesus summoned his disciples to him as an initial answer to the prayer for the Lord to send workers out into the harvest field: <<*therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest*>> (Matthew 9:38), clearly indicating that the account continues here without a break. Jesus had enhanced the prayer of the disciples with an all night vigil of his own: <<*Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles*>> (Luke 6:12-13).

Jesus already knows the qualities of those he chooses: <<*Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil'*>> (John 6:70), yet he has demonstrated here that he called them first to discipleship with many others and then designated them as apostles. Thus he provides a model for the church not to rush into selecting people for office too soon but to allow them time to show they are worthy of their calling: <<*Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure*>> (1 Timothy 5:22), <<*And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons*>> (1 Timothy 3:10). After all, those that would teach others must first themselves be taught.

Twelve is reflective of the twelve tribes of Israel and symbolic of the continuity of God's plan of salvation. Therefore, the church, which is built on this foundation of the twelve leaders of Israel's remnant, represents the true heirs of God's ancient promises. They became the new spiritual fathers, the twelve stars of the church's crown: <<*A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,*

*with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars>>*  
(Revelation 12:1).

These twelve men, although one of them would need to be replaced shortly after Jesus' ascension, would be trained to start the process of overseeing the building of the new church and will ultimately support Christ in the final judgement of the church: <<*Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel>>* (Matthew 19:28), for true believers become spiritual Israel: <<*Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God>>* (Romans 2:29).

It is from this foundation that many civilian judicial systems have determined that juries should be formed, consisting of twelve people with whom faithful and true judgement can be entrusted.

The disciples will have authority over unclean spirits and to cure every disease and every sickness, just as Jesus did: <<*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people>>* (Matthew 4:23), and: <<*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness>>* (Matthew 9:35).

Unclean spirits are often referred to as evil spirits and are those under the dominion of the devil: <<*And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet>>* (Revelation 16:13).

That they could cure every disease and every sickness was to provide them with the means to validate the claims of their Kingdom teaching, although it also underlines the compassionate nature of God. However, it should be noted that such healing will never occur on every occasion, especially in the modern era since there exists sufficient documentary evidence to support the Gospel without the need for miracles. This does not mean the God has less compassion now and certainly no less power for miracles do occur on a daily basis and are global. Therefore, the total number of miracles being performed is probably far greater today than was the case when they were being performed over a much smaller geographical area.

The way that Jesus equips his disciples shows that it was never intended that people should go to church but that they should become the church within their communities. Today, many churches have become irrelevant to the majority simply because they appear to be a closed or insular society, while the world around them suffers so much pain, social injustice, violence, greed and indifference to their creator God.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;

### Matthew 10:2

Apostles is the plural of Greek *apostolos* and is used only here in Matthew. It describes those commissioned to be Jesus' special representatives, while disciples (v.1) is used more broadly to refer to anyone who believed in and chose to follow Jesus, either literally as these men did, or by choosing to live their life according to his teaching and will.

An apostle is literally one who is sent or a messenger, a human angel perhaps, with Jesus designated the first apostle for he was sent by the Father: <<*Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling, consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also 'was faithful in all God's house'*>> (Hebrews 3:1-2). The OT prophets were also designated as messengers sent by God and could be seen as the forerunners of these twelve men.

Paul records the apostolic spiritual gifting: <<*And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues*>> (1 Corinthians 12:28), and: <<*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers*>> (Ephesians 4:11). However, many scholars accept that true apostles are only those who were directly designated by Jesus, such as the twelve here: <<*Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'*>> (John 20:21), and several others who came to prominence shortly after Jesus' ascension, such as Paul: <<*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God*>> (Romans 1:1), and James: <<*but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother*>> (Galatians 1:19), but that no true apostles have existed since that time.

First, Simon. Peter heads all the lists of the Twelve, refer to Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16 and Acts 1:13, and served as their spokesman. He received his new name directly from Jesus: <<*He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)*>> (John 1:42). Peter, along with James and his brother John, made up Jesus' inner circle or core group, although there was no apparent hierarchy among the apostles.

Along with Andrew, these three men form two sets of brothers and are traditionally the first four to be called to serve Jesus, although others may have chosen to follow Jesus as his disciples before these men were called from their business as fishermen.

<sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananæan, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

### Matthew 10:3-4

There is remarkable diversity among the twelve apostles, including fishermen, two of whom were described as being tempestuous: <<*James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”)*>> (Mark 3:17); a tax collector (Matthew); and a zealous revolutionary (Simon the Cananæan or Zealot in Luke 6:15), whose title here probably refers to his birth place of Cana in Galilee.

The Zealots, the Greek word *zēlōtēs*, were political activists, and were radically opposed to Roman rule. Apart from Jesus' call and influence on their lives, Matthew and Simon would have had deep animosity toward each other, with Matthew, as a tax collector, working in the service of Rome and Simon, as a Zealot, seeking to overthrow Rome. The Gospel unites through diversity.

Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town or birthplace as Peter and Andrew as recorded in John 1:44.

Bartholomew is Hebrew *Bar-Tholomaios* or son of Tholomaios. It is a family name that occurs in each of the lists in the Synoptic Gospels. He is probably the same person as Nathanæl listed in John's Gospel and is frequently paired with Philip.

Thomas was also called the twin and has been dubbed 'doubting Thomas' as he was absent when the resurrected Christ initially appeared to ten of the apostles and would not believe their account of what had happened. Jesus reappeared to the group a week later: <<*Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe’*>> (John 20:27-29).

Matthew is also known as Levi: <<*As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphæus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him*>> (Mark 2:14), an account that also shows him to make up the third pair of brothers along with James son of Alphæus, who is not to be confused with James the brother of John, or James the half-brother of Jesus.

Other ancient authorities read Lebbæus, or Lebbæus called Thaddæus, who is probably the same man as Judas Son of James in Luke 6:16.

Judas Iscariot is always listed last to highlight his notoriety and shame; Iscariot most likely denotes where he was from. He was the treasurer for the group: <<*He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it*>> (John 12:6), and the one who betrayed Jesus.

Traditionally, only one of these men died of natural causes in old age, John the author of the fourth Gospel, three letters and Revelation. Ten would be martyred for their faith in service to Jesus, while Judas Iscariot would commit suicide for his betrayal of the Messiah: <<*Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself*>> (Matthew 27:5).

The men are all listed in pairs for they would be sent out that way for fellowship, security and above all else acceptability as witnesses: <<*In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid*>> (John 8:17). Here one pair are listed as Thomas and Matthew, whereas the other two synoptic Gospels (Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15), reverse the order probably to denote the order of calling to service, and perhaps demonstrating the humility of Matthew in listing his companion before himself. This is also the only one of the three accounts where he is listed as a tax collector, reminding the readers of his disreputable past.

It is generally accepted that the majority of these men were Galilæans from middle income professions although without any coming from trained religious leadership and thereby having preconceived ideas on their role as apostles. Remarkably all, especially their acknowledged spokesman Peter, would prove to be inadequate within themselves for the role given. Thus they would come to learn, and to demonstrate, that the role of all disciples is to depend totally on God and not on their own ability, although they are also expected to act independently within their gifting and training.

#### VI.a.ii Matthew 10:5-15 - The Mission of the Twelve

Having chosen his twelve apostles, Jesus now sends them out on their first solo mission into the Jewish towns and villages throughout the region of Galilee, for their initial Gospel proclamation is not intended for the Gentiles.

As well as telling them whom to go to, Jesus instructs them on what they can and cannot take with them and how they are to conduct themselves. In addition, he provides them with the authority to preach the Gospel, supporting their words with miraculous works of physical healing and spiritual cleansing.

Teachers should train students in part by giving them practical activities to undertake, and that Jesus did so best explains the disciples' rapid imitation of his miraculous ministry in the years immediately following his resurrection, as acknowledged by Paul: <<*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works*>> (2 Corinthians 12:12). Yet Matthew provides these instructions not merely as a matter of historical interest, for had his interest been merely historical he would not have rearranged the material in this section so thoroughly to be relevant to his readers, but as a living message to his own audience. Thus he includes some of Jesus' teachings not strictly relevant to the first mission but which his audience would recognise as particularly relevant in their own day, including prosecutions in synagogues and pagan courts.

<sup>5</sup> **These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans,**

#### Matthew 10:5

Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans. The mission was restricted to Jewish Galilee, which was surrounded on all sides by Gentile territory except for Samaria to the south. Refer to the comments made on Luke 9:52 and Luke 10:33 for more information on Samaria and its links to

Judaism. Although the Gospel would later be sent to the whole world: <<*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*>> (Acts 1:8), Jesus' initial ministry was to the Jewish people.

<sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

### Matthew 10:6

The lost sheep of the house of Israel denotes the whole lost nation of Israel rather than just part of it. Jesus came first to the chosen race: <<*He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him*>> (John 1:11), and: <<*When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways*>> (Acts 3:26). The Gospel message would then be taken out to Diaspora Jews, those dispersed by the Assyrians, the Babylonians and during the Hellenisation of Palestine, which saw Jews becoming natives in many nations, both within and beyond the Roman Empire. God's plan is that the Gospel would be proclaimed first to the Jew, then to the Gentile: <<*Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles*>> (Acts 13:46), <<*For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*>> (Romans 1:16), and: <<*There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek*>> (Romans 2:9-10).

This limitation fits the historic priority of Israel in salvation history, was practical since these disciples were not yet equipped to cross cultural boundaries, and would have undoubtedly not been objectionable to the first disciples themselves. Jesus did see a future hope for the Gentiles in the Scriptures, as commented on in Matthew 8:11-12, but he limited his own mission primarily to Israel, or more specifically the Jews living in Galilee. This was only a temporary restriction that Jesus would later lift: <<*And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come*>> (Matthew 24:14). However, it had to be demonstrated just how wide the rejection would be by the Jews first before it could be realised that the Kingdom actually necessitates the Gentile mission that was so prevalent during the early years of the church.

<sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." <sup>8a</sup> Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.

### Matthew 10:7-8a

As you go. That this is good news about the Kingdom remains the church's message: <<*But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women*>> (Acts 8:12), <<*But I do not count my life of any value*>>

*to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace. 'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again'>> (Acts 20:24-25), and: <<He lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance>> (Acts 28:30-31), is clear not only from the fact that Matthew nowhere revokes it but also from the roughly parallel formulation in his Gospel's conclusion; for as you go, and not the imperative 'go' as in the NIV rendering of Matthew 28:19, is a participle in both instances, here and in: <<Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit>> (Matthew 28:19).*

Proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near". Cure the sick. Jesus instructed the twelve disciples to minister to both the spiritual and the physical needs of the lost. Thus the apostles' message, the Kingdom of Heaven, is the same as that of John the Baptist: <<'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'>> (Matthew 3:2), which was then confirmed by Jesus: <<From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'>> (Matthew 4:17), and their power is an extension of Jesus' own power and authority (v.1), enabling them to do the same works he has done and eventually even more: <<Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father>> (John 14:12). Ultimately, they were preparing these people to hear the words of their Messiah for themselves, and they should have known what to expect of him: <<Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other>> (Psalm 85:9-10).

All disciples are to proclaim Jesus' lordship: he has all authority in the universe: <<And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'>> (Matthew 28:18), and: <<As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed>> (Daniel 7:13-14), and he now appears alongside the Father and the Spirit as already noted in Matthew 28:19. To make disciples for this King is to proclaim the good news that God's future reign is already active in this age: <<and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age>> (Matthew 28:20).

<sup>8b</sup> You received without payment; give without payment.

#### Matthew 10:8b

You received without payment; give without payment. The disciples have freely received the gift of the Kingdom of Heaven, and they are likewise to share this Gospel just as freely. The ultimate gift on offer is free grace: <<they are now

*justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*>> (Romans 3:24). Grace should be shown to all others they encounter.

<sup>9</sup> Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food.

### Matthew 10:9-10

Take no gold or silver; or sandals, or a staff. Jesus is not prohibiting the Twelve from owning any of these items; rather, he is stressing the specific requirements of this particular mission. This is to be a relatively quick missionary journey, so they are not to spend time procuring extra supplies; those to whom they minister must support their mission, for labourers deserve their food. Although some have seen a contradiction between the commissioning of the twelve apostles here in Matthew and that described in Luke 9:3, when compared to the other similar commissioning account: <<*He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics*>> (Mark 6:8-9), it seems best to understand all the account variations as being complementary; that is, that they report different parts of a longer set of instructions, in which Jesus told the Twelve not to acquire new supplies, but that they could take the essential supplies needed for the journey, i.e. the staff and sandals that they already had. Refer to comments made on Luke 9:3 for further considerations on this event.

That Jesus sent his apostles out with only the basic provision is a direct contrast with the religious leaders of his day who would be dressed in all their finery and who tended to make a great show of their affluence and status. This would both enable the listener to identify with these men and also better accept the authenticity of the Gospel message they brought with them. Originally, God had intended not that the priests would become rich from their duties to him but that they would have sufficient. The same message now applies to the disciples: <<*Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*>> (1 Corinthians 9:13-14). One consideration Luther gave for moving away from the established church came about from him witnessing the inhabitants of a local monastery feasting and living in luxury, while the local peasants served them and often starved to death. His point was that the church was there to serve the people and not vice versa.

However one may view the instructions for this journey, it is clear that disciples are to promote a simplistic approach to evangelisation, not showing an abundance of wealth or goods as a result of trusting in God but in the sufficiency of his provision, i.e. that God will provide whatever is necessary for the work he has called his followers to do in his name. God does not promise to make people into lottery winners, he promises them eternal salvation.

<sup>11</sup> **Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave.**

#### Matthew 10:11

Whatever town or village you enter. This indicates that the apostles were not to pick and choose where they would minister or where they would simply pass by. They should go into each place in turn to look for those who would likely meet the criteria that Jesus had set for them.

Worthy indicates someone who responds positively to the disciples' message. Even during this time of corruption and apostasy there would always be some that would be considered suitable to both hear the message and willing to offer hospitality to those who would proclaim it. Paul would seek out those who would support his work as he travelled, for example: <<*There we found believers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome*>> (Acts 28:14).

Stay there until you leave indicates that Jesus did not want them to move from house to house to find the best accommodation and provision. Having a primary base would make it easier for the local people to know where to find the disciples in order to come to hear them or bring their sick. It would also make a statement to any opponents that they would not run and hide, but were prepared to stand and proclaim the Gospel freely and openly, as Paul confirmed to King Agrippa: <<*Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner*>> (Acts 26:26).

<sup>12</sup> **As you enter the house, greet it.**

#### Matthew 10:12

Greet it means to offer a blessing in Jesus' name upon those who live within the house. Just as an undeserved curse is ineffective: <<*Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, an undeserved curse goes nowhere*>> (Proverbs 26:2), so too a blessing will only be efficacious if merited. Although these men were sent out with the authority of the Son of God, they were still required to offer a blessing in love and not command any rights of access or support from the inhabitants. Paul held a similar viewpoint: <<*For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love – and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus*>> (Philemon 8-9).

<sup>13</sup> **If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.**

#### Matthew 10:13

Whether it be individuals, homes, or whole communities that receive the greeting, let your peace come upon it indicates they had recognised the Twelve as God's emissaries.

The expression peace is the Hebrew word *shalom* that has a much richer connotation than the English word does since it conveys not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of a right relationship with God. It gives the overall impression and the idea that 'all is well' in one's life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation.

**<sup>14</sup> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.**

#### Matthew 10:14

Shake off the dust from your feet. This was a sign used by Jews after leaving a Gentile region. For the missionaries it is a sign of judgment on those rejecting the Gospel: <<*So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium*>> (Acts 13:51).

**Jews would use a similar technique to shake off anything considered displeasing to God:** <<*I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, 'So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise. Thus may they be shaken out and emptied.'* And all the assembly said, 'Amen', and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised>> (Nehemiah 5:13).

**<sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.**

#### Matthew 10:15

It will be more tolerable, on the Day of Judgment. Increased understanding of God's revelation means increased responsibility for all who hear it, regardless of whether they accept it as being true or not. Those who do accept its truth and do what they can to live by the teaching of Christ need not fear: <<*Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world*>> (1 John 4:17).

Sodom and Gomorrah had become synonymous with God's eternal judgement. A theme picked up on again in the NT: <<*and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement*>> (2 Peter 2:6-9), and: <<*Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire*>> (Jude 7).

## VI.b Matthew 10:16-25 - Coming Persecutions

Jesus prepares his disciples for a worldwide mission to the Gentiles and for the persecution that will inevitably accompany their mission: <<*Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*>> (2 Timothy 3:12). However, persecution brings with it an opportunity for personal testimony.

<sup>16</sup> **‘See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.**

### Matthew 10:16

Sheep into the midst of wolves. Jesus warns the disciples about the persecution and danger that missionary disciples will encounter and need to endure.

Since sheep are defenceless in the face of wolves then Jesus calls on disciples to show the wisdom not to provoke opponents unnecessarily, although they are to remain faithful to their calling and to stand firm when facing opposition.

So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. The serpent was the symbol of shrewdness and intellectual cunning: <<*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden”?’>> (Genesis 3:1), and: <<They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter>> (Psalm 58:4-5), while the dove was emblematic of simple innocence: <<Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without sense; they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria>> (Hosea 7:11).*

<sup>17</sup> **Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues;**

### Matthew 10:17

Beware of them. Jesus is not calling on his disciples to fear such people but to note that they will be opposed by those who are offended by the message that confronts them and their own ways in the world. They are but men who have chosen to oppose God. The righteous will know peace in heaven for their work will glorify God; the opponent will face severe punishment: <<*Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: Your own people who hate you and reject you for my name’s sake have said, ‘Let the Lord be glorified, so that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame*>> (Isaiah 66:5).

Hand you over to councils. In Jesus’ day these refer to the religious leaders showing there are two kinds of shepherd: <<*Thus said the Lord my God: Be a shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them kill them and go unpunished; and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the Lord, for I have become rich’; and their own shepherds have no pity on them*>> (Zechariah 11:4-5), who were supposed to administer justice in the name of the God they served: <<*Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well*>> (Ecclesiastes 3:16).

Synagogues were not only places of worship but also places where discipline was carried out, i.e. flog you. Local councils probably consisted of town elders, with special privileges for local priests. Synagogue floggings probably resembled in some respects the custom known from later sources: a strap of calf leather with interwoven thongs, brought against the condemned person's back twenty-six times and the chest thirteen times (Makkot 3:10-12).

**The punishment was technically lawful when merited by the offence:** <<Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbour will be degraded in your sight>> (Deuteronomy 25:3). **It was something endured by Paul:** <<Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one>> (2 Corinthians 11:24), **as well as the men being trained here by Jesus:** <<and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name>> (Acts 5:40-41).

<sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles.

#### Matthew 10:18

Dragged before governors and kings. If the punishment the Jews could administer did not fit their purpose they would hand the prisoners over to the Romans as they did Jesus: <<As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate>> (Mark 15:1). It should also be noted that, since Judæa had only one governor and one puppet king, then the use of the plural by Matthew is indicative once again of the mission going beyond the geographical boundaries of ancient Israel in order to reach both Diaspora Jews and Gentiles.

As a testimony to them and the Gentiles. As Jesus foretold, the early church leaders would be called before Jewish officials, something fulfilled in Acts 4:1-22; the secular authorities of Israel, fulfilled in Acts 12:1-4; and Rome, fulfilled in Acts 24:1-23. David had also written about representing God before other kings, acknowledging his feelings for doing so: <<I will also speak of your decrees before kings, and shall not be put to shame>> (Psalm 119:46).

Ultimately, it does not matter what authority one is brought before or what punishments they can administer because all of them are instituted by God and will be judged by him for their actions: <<By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just>> (Proverbs 8:15), and: <<Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God>> (Romans 13:1). **Yet David cries out almost in bewilderment:** <<Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us">> (Psalm 2:1-3 ESV), **then goes on to note that:** <<They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one>> (Psalm 14:3).

<sup>19</sup> When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; <sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

#### Matthew 10:19-20

Do not worry. Jesus encourages his disciples not to be anxious because the same Spirit who has guided and empowered Jesus: <<Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit>> (Matthew 1:18), <<But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit’>> (Matthew 1:20), <<And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him>> (Matthew 3:16), and: <<Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil>> (Matthew 4:1), will speak through his disciples amid their most difficult challenges.

The Spirit of your Father speaking through you. God allows these hearings precisely as a testimony: <<And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit>> (Mark 13:10-11), and God will empower the disciples by the Holy Spirit of prophecy: <<Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’>> (Revelation 19:10).

<sup>21</sup> Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;

#### Matthew 10:21

Brother will betray brother to death. Jesus prophesies that friction within families between those who accept and those who reject the Gospel will be extremely dire. Although the Gospel is a message of peace, harmony and goodwill towards all mankind, the reality of the passions generated by the issues it raises will see families torn apart. Jesus would again give warning of the consequences of following him and the rationale for the response of others: <<If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me>> (John 15:19-21). The prophet also warns that it will be those who are closest that are

likely to betray: <<*Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace*>> (Micah 7:5). How true this has proved to be: <<*but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?'*>> (Luke 22:48).

<sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

### Matthew 10:22

Hated by all because of my name. Jesus' disciples have the privilege of carrying his name, but the antagonism and hatred that is directed toward him will naturally shift to them: <<*Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name*>> (Matthew 24:9).

Endures to the end will be saved. Christians are to keep themselves in God's love by growing strong doctrinally, persevering in prayer, and waiting for the Lord's Second Coming. Paul wrote: <<*The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself*>> (2 Timothy 2:11-13), showing the Kingdom rewards and responsibilities that will be bestowed on those who do overcome all the challenges in life by staying close to the Lord and his calling on their lives.

In a culture dominated by honour and shame, in which the opinion of family members was paramount, and with the highest degree of familial loyalty expected, such a threat demanded an incomparably high allegiance to Christ.

<sup>23</sup> When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

### Matthew 10:23

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next shows there is no expectation for disciples just to roll over and die. Many, of course, would be martyred for the Gospel but even some of them would flee at times in order to fight another day, most notably Paul: <<*After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket*>> (Acts 9:23-25), along with those who worked with him: <<*And when an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to maltreat them and to stone them, the apostles learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; and there they continued proclaiming the good news*>> (Acts 14:5-7).

You will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. Several interpretations have been suggested that the coming of the Son of Man may refer to:

1. Jesus' resurrection, when he came back from the dead.
2. His sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.
3. His coming in judgment on Jerusalem when it was destroyed in AD70.
4. The Second Coming of Christ at the end of the age.

Option 4 helps make sense of the larger fact: that the mission to Israel must continue alongside the mission to the nations until Jesus returns. But interpretations 1 and 3 also have significant arguments to support them, and they give a more natural explanation for the need for haste in reaching all the towns of Israel.

In the case of option 4, this verse is best understood in light of the preceding verses (vv.16-22), as a reference to the widespread persecution that occurred prior to the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish temple in AD70. In this case, the judgment on Israel reflected in these events is pictured as a foreshadowing of the final judgment that will come upon all who reject Christ as their Saviour when Christ comes in power and great glory at the end of the age.

<sup>24</sup> **'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master;**

#### Matthew 10:24

A disciple is not above the teacher. The ultimate goal of a disciple is to be like his master; a well-established belief in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. Jesus would later expand on this with: <<*Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them*>> (John 13:16), for it is God who is the sender.

Nor a slave above the master. Although Paul would later write: <<*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*>> (Galatians 3:28), and: <<*In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*>> (Colossians 3:11), he did not intend that relationships for those in Christ had altered in the world, only in the church. Although Jesus may be alluding to that here as well, it is more likely that he is reiterating that his Lordship is paramount in a believer's life.

<sup>25</sup> **it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!**

## Matthew 10:25

It is enough. The disciple does not need to aspire to rise above Christ but should be content to be a good servant in accordance with the teaching they have received and the calling that places upon them.

Beelzebul is referred to again in: <<*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons'*>> (Matthew 12:24), and: <<*If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges*>> (Matthew 12:27). It means 'master of the house' and refers to Satan. The accusation that Jesus, the true 'master of all', was really Satan is shockingly perverse; how much more then, should Jesus' own disciples expect to be falsely accused and maligned.

Those of his household is a simple statement to refer to all disciples of Christ: past, present and future.

### VI.c Matthew 10:26-11:1 - Characteristics of missionary disciples

Disciples are representatives of Christ, whose Kingdom they are sent forth to proclaim. This will bring them into direct opposition and even conflict with many for whom the Gospel is an offence, for those where it threatens their culture and lifestyle choices. Therefore, disciples will be persecuted by their opponents but they need not fear such people since they can do no more than kill the mortal body, whereas it is God who is the keeper and judge of the soul.

Those who do remain faithful in their service to God will receive their due rewards in his eternal Kingdom, which will be of far greater benefit than any temporal rewards that can be obtained or punishments that must be endured during the short duration of human existence.

#### VI.c.i Matthew 10:26-33 - Whom to Fear

True believers, even those living under the most repressive of regimes, ultimately have nothing to fear from people, even if they are martyred for their beliefs. God is the sole judge and it is he that everyone should fear: reverentially for believers, and in terror for those who oppose him.

**<sup>26</sup> 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.**

## Matthew 10:26

Have no fear of them. Disciples need not fear those in authority or even members of the general public who oppose them, persecute them or take extreme measures against them. As the rest of the verse indicates, whatever they do cannot remain undisclosed for God will know of it and it will be presented as evidence against such people on the Day of Judgement.

Nothing is covered up. Mankind has a history of covering up the truth and putting spin on all types of activities, whether political, financial, military, or even personal, four key areas that often have detrimental impact on so many other

people. All of their secrecy will one day be revealed when they stand before the judgement seat: *<<For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light>>* (Mark 4:22).

**<sup>27</sup> What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.**

### Matthew 10:27

What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light. Disciples will come to know and understand some of the Kingdom secrets as God chooses to reveal them through his Holy Spirit. A believer, in turn, is charged then to publically proclaim what has been revealed in his Word so that all of mankind will hear the message of the Kingdom proclaimed in one form or another.

Proclaim from the housetops. Up to now Jesus has consistently called for secrecy; refer to comments made on Matthew 8:4. However, the time is approaching when the secret will be proclaimed universally. Since houses in Palestine had flat roofs: *<<About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray>>* (Acts 10:9), then this makes a good analogy for the type of platform for such open and public declarations of the Gospel message. What is to be proclaimed is the ultimate wisdom of God: *<<Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks>>* (Proverbs 1:20-21).

**<sup>28</sup> Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

### Matthew 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body for they cannot separate the believer from God: *<<Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?>>* (Romans 8:35). Therefore, there is nothing for a believer to fear: *<<Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread>>* (Isaiah 8:12).

Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. God will judge all men at the end of the age. Those whom he finds eternally guilty will be appropriately punished for their failure to accept the Gospel: *<<These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might>>* (2 Thessalonians 1:9), while those who endure will be rewarded beyond measure for their faithfulness to Christ. Therefore, any punishment inflicted by humans in this life is ultimately of no consequence and the charge is do not fear.

**Jesus had earlier instructed his followers not to worry:** *<<Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?>>* (Matthew 6:25). **In many cases, people worry about**

things they have no control over or even things that may not happen or will have no direct impact on them if they do occur. Here, the threat is real but Jesus is still calling people to have faith in him and to face whatever challenges life brings with fortitude and trust in God for the right Kingdom outcome.

**29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father.**

#### Matthew 10:29

Sparrows were customarily thought of as the smallest of creatures, and were a cheap source of meat sold in markets for the poorest people.

The penny, Greek *assarion*, worth 1/16<sup>th</sup> of a denarius, was one of the least valuable Roman coins: <<*Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny*>> (Matthew 5:26). It was worth less than one hour's wages for a labourer.

Unperceived by your Father. God is sovereign over even the most insignificant of events, such as the death of a small bird, i.e. fall to the ground, and they do not go unnoticed by him, for: <<*He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep*>> (Psalm 121:4).

**30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.**

#### Matthew 10:30-31

Even the hairs of your head are all counted. This saying would be understood by early Jewish readers to mean that God cares for those who are his own and no harm would befall them, for similar analogies were often used in Scripture: <<*Then the people said to Saul, 'Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great victory in Israel? Perish the thought! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground; for he has worked with God today.'* So the people ransomed Jonathan, and he did not die>> (1 Samuel 14:45), <<*Then she said, 'Please, may the king keep the Lord your God in mind, so that the avenger of blood may kill no more, and my son not be destroyed.'* He said, 'As the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground'>> (2 Samuel 14:11), <<*So Solomon responded, 'If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die'*>> (1 Kings 1:52), and: <<*Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads*>> (Acts 27:34).

So do not be afraid. Since the Heavenly Father gives constant sovereign supervision even to seemingly insignificant creatures, surely he will also care for his own children in their mission to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.

You are of more value. God has continuously demonstrated his deep love and care for humankind. Since he cares for all creation but shows special attention to humankind, it is clear that he values them above all else on earth. Refer to comments made on Matthew 6:26.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

#### Matthew 10:32-33

Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others. A Christian could easily avoid persecution by denying that he or she is Jesus’ disciple. But the true disciple does not fear death (v.28), and will publicly acknowledge and confess Jesus. However, Jesus does forgive the occasional lapse when disciples do not act as they should under extreme provocation, as was seen with Peter shortly after Jesus’ arrest: <<*Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, ‘I do not know the man!’ At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly*>> (Matthew 26:74-75). Jesus had clearly forgiven Peter shortly after his resurrection, if not immediately at the time when he had denied knowing his Lord. This was clearly demonstrated as they ate together by the lake: <<*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs’*>> (John 21:15).

Whoever denies me. The eternal consequences for those who do deny Christ, in fact, will be far worse than the persecution that they sought to avoid.

#### VI.c.ii Matthew 10:34-39 - Not Peace, but a Sword

Although the Gospel message is one of peace and goodwill, it will not bring harmony but social division, even within families, as there will be many who will vehemently oppose those who embrace the Gospel.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

<sup>36</sup> and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

<sup>37</sup> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

#### Matthew 10:34-37

I have not come to bring peace. The Gospel was never designed to create strife and division between people. It is a simple reality that God knew from men’s hearts that some would accept his offer of free grace and salvation although most

it seems would not. If all were to accept it then there would be peace on earth in the same way as there is peace in heaven. God knew from the beginning that it would not be so. Nor would opposition come from those at a distance; it would come from those who are closest: *<<It is not enemies who taunt me – I could bear that; it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me – I could hide from them. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend>>* (Psalm 55:12-13).

Sword is a metaphor for the inevitable separation between those who believe in Christ and those who do not, even within a family, i.e. faith in Christ may set a man against his father. Jesus' own family opposed him before they came to recognise his true identity: *<<When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind'>>* (Mark 3:21), and: *<<So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judæa so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' (For not even his brothers believed in him)>>* (John 7:3-5). Thus, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Jesus asks for unqualified allegiance, something even the most esteemed rabbi did not demand. The central point of these verses is that love of God and his Kingdom must take precedence over every human relationship. This was said of the Levites, who had taken on the role of ministering before God: *<<who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he ignored his kin, and did not acknowledge his children. For they observed your word, and kept your covenant>>* (Deuteronomy 33:9), yet by Jesus' day, in fact long before that, they had turned to their own self-interest. This history of the church seems to lend itself to a repeating pattern.

**Jesus showed that he valued family responsibilities but teaches that allegiance to God overrides even this, something that was not new in Scripture: <<If anyone secretly entices you – even if it is your brother, your father's son or your mother's son, or your own son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or your most intimate friend – saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods', whom neither you nor your ancestors have known, any of the gods of the peoples that are around you, whether near you or far away from you, from one end of the earth to the other, you must not yield to or heed any such persons. Show them no pity or compassion and do not shield them>>** (Deuteronomy 13:6-8).

<sup>38</sup> and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

### Matthew 10:38

Take up the cross. Crucifixion is a shocking metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must deny himself, i.e. die to self-will, take up his own cross, that is, embrace God's will, no matter the cost, and follow Christ. This is a theme that Jesus will return to: *<<Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me>>* (Matthew 16:24).

The moment a person becomes one of Christ's followers, their own life and will become forfeit; they die with Christ to sin, that is, to the right to make selfish, self-seeking choices: <<Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life>> (Romans 6:3-4). Although the majority of modern day Christians do not make this level of commitment, the call is clear and has never been rescinded.

<sup>39</sup> Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

#### Matthew 10:39

Those who find their life will lose it. This refers to those who will live their earthly lives primarily for themselves or their own self-interest rather than putting God at the centre of their life: <<Truly I tell you, they have received their reward>> (Matthew 6:2b). Whereas, those who are prepared to make sacrifices in order to follow the call of Jesus on their lives, may not have some of the privileges others enjoy in this life but they will be richly rewarded in heaven, they will find it. This is the reward for those who are prepared to lose their life for Jesus' sake.

#### VI.c.iii Matthew 10:40-11:1 - Rewards

Jesus provides a summary of the rewards that will be given to those who honour God by welcoming others in an appropriate manner, befitting Christ.

<sup>40</sup> 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.'

#### Matthew 10:40

Whoever welcomes you welcomes me. Christ's disciples bear his message and his authority (v.1), so to receive them is to receive Jesus. This is an indication of step parallelism, where one thing leads to something of greater significance. Here, Jesus says that those who implicitly or explicitly accept him are accepting God as their Heavenly Father, i.e. welcomes the one who sent me: <<You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus>> (Galatians 4:13-14).

<sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; <sup>42</sup> and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

#### Matthew 10:41-42

A prophet is one who speaks the words of God with full authority to do so.

Will receive a prophet's reward. That is, they will share in the rewards God gives to the faithful prophet, for the helper also played a part in the prophet's work.

A righteous person is one who has the imputed righteousness that comes from obeying Jesus' words and teaching.

A cup of cold water is an insignificant gift and of little intrinsic value; yet priceless to someone who is thirsty. It may be all that a peasant would have to offer a weary traveller but they should still offer it as something of value. Jesus is indicating that it is not the value of the gift but the true heart intent behind the giving that is important. All work for the Kingdom will be seen to be of significant value when it is finally calculated.

To one of these little ones, that is, to anyone in need, especially those of lower social standing, who may be overlooked when leaders focus on those more prominent in the community: <<***My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?>> (James 2:1-7). God values even the sparrows!***