

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

# JESUS IS KING



## Principles for Persecution

**Text:** Matthew 10:16-42

### 1. Persecution will come. - Matthew 10:16-18

Jesus warned His disciples that they would face persecution. He sent them **as sheep in the midst of wolves**.

**Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves:** Despite their vulnerable position, Jesus' disciples were not to defend themselves with worldly means.

They were to remain **harmless as doves**, though **wise as serpents**.

Remaining harmless would keep them from giving in to the temptation of retaliation. God never gives a Christian the right to retaliate.

**See 1 Peter 3:9**

**But beware of men: for they will deliver you up:** Jesus also warned them that men would persecute them in the government courts (**councils**) and the religious areas (**synagogues**).

**Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake** This was a remarkable statement, recognizing the great influence the message would have. **Governors and kings** would notice them – and arrest them, bringing them to trial.

**For my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles:** Because they were persecuted for Jesus' **sake**, they could be a **testimony** to both religious and civic persecutors.

The specific mention of the *Gentiles* suggests that the wider mission of the post-resurrection period is already in view.

## **2. God will defend You. - Matthew 10:19-20**

Jesus' disciples could have perfect trust in God in that moment, knowing that He would speak through them even if they were unprepared.

**For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak:** This gave them confidence that the **Spirit of the Father** would speak to and through them at the necessary moment, even if they were not prepared with a statement.

This isn't a justification of poor preparation in teaching and preaching God's Word, but it is a promise of strength and

guidance for those being persecuted that have an opportunity to testify of Jesus.

### **3. The Scale of Persecution - Matthew 10:21-23**

Jesus knew that in some cases the gospel would divide family members, and that some of the most bitter persecution would take place among families.

**And cause them to be put to death:** Jesus plainly said that persecution would sometimes result in **death**. Most Christians have endured economic or social persecution but through the centuries, literally millions have given their lives in faithfulness to Jesus.

**And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake:** At times this has been true; when entire cultures have **hated** the followers of Jesus.

No one who is filled with the presence of Jesus and lives like He did can be hated for good reason.

**But he who endureth to the end will be saved:** A commitment to *endure to the end* is required for those who will weather the storms of persecution.

This text is talking about being “saved” from the persecution. It's not talking about being saved from sin.

**But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another:** Jesus taught His disciples that it was wrong for them to pursue martyrdom. They were not to run towards persecution, or even remain if they had the chance for an

honorable escape. If they could **flee to another** place, they were to do it.

#### **4. Why Persecution? - Matthew 10:24-25**

Simply put, the disciples should not expect to be treated any *better* than Jesus was treated. If they called Jesus Himself Satan (**Beelzebub**), how much worse should the disciples of Jesus expect!

This already is the second reference in Matthew we have to Jesus being associated with Satan by His enemies. It would seem that this was a frequent accusation.

#### **5. Don't Fear Persecution - Matthew 10:26-31**

Jesus' disciples could have confidence that the truth *would* prevail, so they should go out and preach it with boldness, despite the danger of persecution.

If persecution or the threat of persecution makes us draw back from speaking and preaching God's word, then in some ways Satan has won a victory. His threat of persecution may not have succeeded in harming us, but in holding back the work of the Word of God.

**For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known:** Jesus promised His persecuted followers that the truth of their sacrifice would be known, even if the persecutors did their best to hide it from the pages of history.

God would reveal all and justify His servants and reveal the crime of those who thought they had hidden it.

**What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.:** The message of Jesus is to be *public*.

It was not for a secret few and was not to be hidden. There isn't one message for the inner circle and another for those on the outside.

**And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell:** God is the one to fear, not the men who persecute the followers of Jesus. The worst they can do is to destroy the body, but being a coward before God can have eternal consequences.

**You are of more value than many sparrows:** Jesus' disciples didn't need to be afraid, because God cared for them, even down to the smallest detail. If God cares for the **sparrows**, and numbers the very hairs of our head, then He will also pay careful attention to our needs.

When you are suffering persecution it is tempting to think that God has forgotten you, but He hasn't.

## **6. The Mindset of the Disciple - Matthew 10:32-39**

The disciple must confess Jesus *publicly* – **before men**. If we will not be public about our allegiance to Him, we cannot expect Him to be public about His allegiance to us.

Every Christian life should have enough evidence – evidence that can be seen by the world – that they are indeed Christian.

**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword:** The message of Jesus – like we saw in the Sermon on the Mount – is a message of peace.

Yet since it calls the individual to a radical commitment to Jesus Himself, it is a message of peace that *divides* between those who choose it and those who reject it. The division between these two choices explains how Jesus **did not come to bring peace but a sword**.

**He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me:** In very strong terms, Jesus explained that the disciple must love and follow Jesus supremely. Our devotion to Jesus must come above even our **own household**.

The disciple must follow Jesus even to the place of taking **his cross**. When a person took a cross in Jesus' day, it was for one reason: to die.

**He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it:** The disciple lives in a paradox.

He can only find life by losing it, and he can only live by dying.

See **1 Peter 4:14-16**

## 7. The Reward for Support - Matthew 10:40-42

The good done to Jesus' disciples was as if it were good done to Jesus Himself, because they are His representatives, carrying on His ministry.

**He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward:** We can share in the reward of God's servants by supporting them in their work.

Even seemingly insignificant works of kindness (**a cup of cold water**) performed for God's people are meaningful in God's eyes.

What could seem more insignificant than giving a person **a cup of cold water**? They are just going to be thirsty again.

Yet even this small gesture will always be remembered and rewarded by God. They **shall by no wise lose** their **reward**.



### GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is persecution?
2. Why does the Christian suffer persecution?
3. What does it mean that we are sent forth as sheep?
4. Are we supposed to seek out persecution?

5. Does a Christian have the right to retaliate? Why or why not?
6. Have you suffered persecution from a family member for Jesus' sake?
7. What does "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed" mean?
8. What did Jesus mean when He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword"?
9. The text says we should take up his cross. What does that mean?
10. How do you lose your life for Jesus' sake?
11. What is the reward for receiving and supporting one of God's ministers?