

10:20 *Spirit of your Father*- Mark has “the Holy Spirit”, but the reference to God as Father paves the way for the next teaching- that human family will likely forsake us if we are faithful to our true Father (:21). Even although “we do not know how to pray for as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit of the Father and Son speaks in us when we pray (Rom. 8:15), if our will / spirit is theirs. To put this in more technical but I think very telling terms: “The subject-object scheme of ‘talking to somebody’ is transcended; He who speaks through us is he who is spoken to” (2). It’s perhaps the thought behind Mt. 10:20: “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”. This is why Paul can thank God that he finds himself praying constantly for Timothy (2 Tim. 1:3)- because he recognizes that not only can we influence God by our prayers, but He influences us in what we pray for.

*In you*- Not, as we might expect, ‘through you’. It may be that the Lord is hinting that if we have the Spirit of God within us, if we are thinking in a spiritual way generally in life, then in times of crisis that Spirit which is in us will guide us to say the right things when under pressure. This approach would explain the present tense here, when the context is speaking of the future (:19). He doesn’t say ‘It will not be you who will speak, but the Spirit which will speak in you’. The present tense is used here in :20 to suggest that if we are *now* spiritually minded, with our spirit being God’s Spirit, then in that future time of crisis we will know how to speak, the words will come out right, because we have lived now in a spiritually minded way. The idea of the Spirit of God speaking in a person, so that their words are not theirs but God’s, was language which Jews would’ve associated with the Old Testament prophets. Again we see the Lord inviting His secular, immature followers to see themselves as the prophets, those whom they had been taught were in a class of their own, and to whom they as mere secular men could in no way pretend. But the Lord’s followers were to be a new Moses, new prophets, a new priesthood, a new Israel.

10:21 *Deliver up*- A term used about the Lord’s delivering to death, just as ‘to cause to be put to death’ is used of His death (Mt. 26:59; 27:1; Mk. 14:55; 1 Pet. 3:18). Our sufferings in the final tribulation, and for preaching the Gospel generally, grant us a fellowship with our Lord’s sufferings. Given the close knit nature of Middle Eastern families, the language of family breakup used here would’ve been far harder for the initial hearers to accept than it is for many of us. The family was seen as sacrosanct, somehow your family would always be there for you. But the Lord is teaching that the dislike of Him and His message would be such that it would unleash a social and psychological force of hatred such as had not been known previously. Judaism taught that it was only Gentile families which were like this- only Gentiles betrayed their brother, their parents and their children. But the Lord is teaching that through Israel’s rejection of Him and His people, Israel were acting like Gentiles and thus becoming as them in God’s sight.

10:22 *Hated of all*- This again was Judaism’s understanding of Israel’s experience in the Gentile world (the word is used of Gentile ‘hate’ for Israel in Lk. 1:71); but the Lord is teaching that His followers were the true Israel, and the Jewish orthodoxy who hated them were in fact the unsaved Gentile world.

*For My Name's sake-* It is the Jews who would do this (Jn. 15:21) and yet by doing so, they would simply be doing what “all nations” would do the Lord’s people ‘for His Name’s sake’ (Mt. 24:9).

*Endures-* It is only by having *hupomone* that we can be saved (Mt. 24:13 cp. Lk. 21:19). And yet Mt. 10:22 would suggest that it will be difficult to have *hupomone* in our last days; many will fall away. Our present world is ever changing; stability in work, residence, relationships etc. seems impossible. *People give up so easily.* The generation brought up on telly and Snickers bars and deregulated Capitalism seeks only immediate resolution and satisfaction; and their short-termism fuels yet further their endless quest for the new and novel. And yet *we* must endure to the end in our work for the Lord and our relationship with Him, believing the same One Faith, living the same spiritual life which those doctrines demand. He amongst us who has *hupomone* to the end of the last generation, right up to the day when the Lord comes, the same will be saved (Mt. 24:13). The Lord Jesus had *hupomone*, it lead Him to the cross and beyond; and we must share His spirit of *hupomone* if we would ultimately share in His salvation (2 Thess. 3:5; Rev. 1:9; 3:10).

*Endures to the end-* The “end” in view may well be the Lord’s second coming, when “the Son of Man comes” (:23), in the context of the latter day preaching of the Gospel during the tribulation; for this passage in Matthew 10 is repeated in the Olivet prophecy in this same context. But not all readers of these words will have lived at that time. James so often comments upon Matthew’s Gospel, and James 5:11 is the only other place in the NT where the words for ‘enduring’ and ‘end’ occur: “We count them happy which endure [an allusion to the ‘blessedness’ of the Beatitudes as recorded in Matthew]. You have heard of the patience [endurance] of Job, and have seen the *end* of the Lord”. The “end” may therefore refer to the end of the period of trial in some aspect which the Lord brings into the life of a believer.

10:23 *When they persecute you-* Persecution was and is a matter of ‘when’ rather than ‘if’. The parable of the sower likewise assumes that persecution because of the word will definitely come. “Persecute” is yet another word which figures frequently in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:10,11,12,44) as an event bound to happen to those who follow the Lord. So often, believers stumble because their experience of it catches them off guard. But we are to expect it, and a life lived under Sermon on the Mount principles will prepare us for the moments of crisis when persecution comes to us in direct and ugly forms.

*This city-* Which city? The fulfilment of this prediction was surely in the persecution of the Christians which began in Jerusalem; but Jesus was not then talking in Jerusalem. But “this city” could be translated “that city”, and the city every Jew had in mind was Jerusalem.

*Flee-* Fleeing persecution was a characteristic of the persecuted prophets and righteous. Hebrews 11 is full of allusion to the language in which Judaism's heroes were spoken about in the first century, and Heb. 11:34 speaks of how the Old Testament heroes of faith *fled* the edge of the

sword (s.w.). Again and again, the Lord is seeking to inspire His secular followers that they are not to glance at those men as icons of a faith far beyond they themselves, but to realize their significance, and to be as them in the history of the new Israel that was now being created.

*Not... till-* The construction could mean that *when* they had gone over the cities of Israel, then the Son of Man would come. "Gone over" translates *teleo*, the noun of which the Lord has just used in the preceding verse (:22) in saying that despite persecution for preaching, they must endure to "the end". All this was His intention for the disciples in the first century, but this whole section of Matthew 10 is later repeated in the Olivet Prophecy, which clearly has reference to the last days. When the witness to Israel is ended, then the Lord will return. The whole picture of preaching within Israel whilst enduring fierce persecution is exactly the picture we get from a futuristic understanding of parts of the book of Revelation. I have outlined such an interpretation in my *The Last Days*.

*Before the Son of Man comes-* The idea could be that they would still have cities to flee to right up to the point when the Son of Man comes. The preachers of the Gospel will somehow be preserved in the final tribulation- that would appear to be the message, although Rev. 11 and other passages hint that some at least of them will die.

10:24 *Not above-* The Lord is partly speaking to the possible desire in some of the disciples to be martyrs for His cause. Peter's attitude in Gethsemane was clearly of that nature, and some of the disciples came from radicalized, fanatical backgrounds. Martyrdom was a common concept in the first century, and the Lord's warning to flee persecution, to bring about a quiet revolution rather than a political one, was aimed at warning against any desire for a quick, glamorous death for the sake of the Kingdom. In the context, He has warned them to flee persecution (:23). He could be saying that the game plan was that *He* was to die in 'that city' of Jerusalem, but *they* were to seek to preserve their lives so that they could make a longer and more effective witness to Him. They were not 'above' Him- He was the one who had to die as the perfect sacrifice, not them. They were to be 'as' Him in terms of personality (:25), and be satisfied with that- it was to be "enough" for them to bear His reproach (:25). The Lord elsewhere taught Peter that the time for martyrdom would indeed come for Peter- but not right then. So there is the possibility that the Lord is implying 'You are not at this stage *huper* ("above") Me, for the moment, focus on being "as" Me (:25), as disciples learning to copy their teacher'. This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that Paul later writes that we are indeed to be *huper* Christ, in the sense of being instead of Him, for His sake, in our witness. Thus we are to preach "*huper* Christ... in Christ's stead [*huper* again]" (2 Cor. 5:20), suffering in the work of preaching *huper* Christ (2 Cor. 12:10; Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:24), giving our lives *huper* Christ (Acts 15:26), in response to Christ's death *huper* us (Rom. 5:8 and often). So when the Lord taught in Mt. 10:24 that the disciples were not to give their lives *huper* Him their Lord and Master, He might have meant 'at this time'. The time would come, but for then, they were to focus on learning of Him.

10:25 *It is enough*- As explained on :24, the Lord may be teaching that the apostles were not to eagerly choose a martyr's death- that was for Him, not them. It was enough for them that they shared in His sufferings by being slandered as He was.

*As His Master*- See on :24.

*The Master of the house*- The head of household. A term often used by the Lord in His parables. And yet He implies that this role is to be functionally aspired to by us. Those instructed in the things of the Kingdom are like a 'master of the house' (Mt. 13:52), and as the household's master would watch for the thief coming, so *we* are to fulfil His function and watch (Mt. 24:43,44).

*Called the Master of the house Beelzebub*- 'Beelzebub' has various possible meanings, but one of them is 'Lord of the house'. By using this term, the Lord's critics were implying He did in fact have a household over whom He was Master and Lord. The Lord is saying that He is the head of the family, the household, and the disciples are His *oikiakos*, His relatives, His family ("them of His household"). This idea of disciples being part of a new family based around their teacher, with them all thereby becoming brothers and sisters, was unheard of in the various schools of the Rabbis. A Rabbi had disciples, but the imagery of family was not used. The family unit was exalted as supreme in importance, and could not be emulated in other contexts. The Lord is teaching that the bonds between Him and His followers were so strong that they were indeed a new family, of more importance and significance than the natural family, which no longer claimed first loyalty in the lives, feelings and self-perceptions of His followers. Even today, this is a radical challenge- for so many turn back from full discipleship because of placing loyalty to family above loyalty to Christ. The reasoning is that what we do for family is done for Christ, and family must come first. But time and again the Lord's teaching is that our spiritual family are to come *before* our natural family. So many divisions and dysfunctions within the Lord's body are caused by those who name His Name insisting on putting their family unity before the unity of *His* family. We can't fellowship *them* because if we do, then uncle Tommy won't fellowship *us*... and so the selfish destruction of the Lord's body continues by those who love themselves more than their Lord.

*How much more*- At first blush, this may seem strange. Usually the charismatic, visible leader attracts more slander than his individual supporters. But we see here the Lord's sensitivity to every individual experience of slander for His sake- for He presumably means 'The sum total of all the suffering of My preachers down the centuries until I return will be far more than what I personally shall suffer from the Jews'. We see here His loveliness- His grace, His generosity of spirit, His sensitivity to all we suffer for Him.

10:26 *Fear them not therefore*- Because of the detailed judgment which is to come, at which every name calling, every suffering, shall be openly revealed for what it is and judged- why fear

men and their religious elites, or even death itself (social or literal) at the hands of their persecution.

*Nothing-* The Greek could be translated 'Nobody'. This would fit with the sense of the next verse, which is that we as persons should not hide ourselves but come out in the open now, just as we shall be openly revealed at judgment day.

*Covered-* The Lord uses the same word to warn against 'covering' our light in the sense of not openly preaching and showing who we are (Lk. 8:16).

*Revealed-* Judgment has a sense of 'now, but not yet'. Thoughts are revealed now, both to God and to ourselves (if we are perceptive enough to know ourselves); and this is especially stimulated and enabled by reflection upon the cross (Lk. 2:35 s.w.). And yet the public revealing of our thoughts and who we essentially are will be done publically at the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:13 s.w.). In this sense, 'we make the answer now'. More on this huge theme in *Judgment to Come*.

*Hid-* The Father right now "sees in secret" (Mt. 6:4,6,18 s.w.). So the concept of being able to even be 'hidden' from Him is foolish. Again, we are to live as if we are at judgment day. Therefore our light of the Gospel should not be placed in a 'hidden place' (Lk. 11:33 s.w.)- the idea of *not* preaching, concealing our faith, is foolish because we shall come out in the open about it at the last day anyway. The "secrets of men" (s.w. 'hidden') shall be judged openly (Rom. 2:16), the "hidden things of darkness" will be made manifest (1 Cor. 4:5)- not to God, who sees them right now anyway, but to ourselves and to others. We are therefore to 'come out' with the Gospel now, whatever the cost, and take comfort that "the hidden man [s.w.] of the heart" is noticed by God and it is this which shall be judged (1 Pet. 3:4).

10:27 *What I tell you-* It could be argued that the content of the Gospel which is to be preached is therefore to be the words of Jesus, what He told the disciples. That is certainly how they understood it, for the four Gospel records are transcripts of the early preaching of the Gospel by the disciples, and they are just that- what the Lord told the disciples.

*In darkness-* In the same way as the day of judgment will be a bringing to light what was done and said in darkness (:26), we should live now in that transparent spirit, openly speaking the Gospel, not hiding it, bearing in mind that one day and for eternity, it will be openly revealed who we are and what we believe. The Lord later stated that "in secret [s.w. "hid" in :26] have I said nothing" (Jn. 18:20). He was for a moment adopting the perspective of the disciples, just as He does with the language of demons; *to them*, what He was telling them was said in darkness, was hidden. But it was not to remain hidden within their hearts and brain cells, they were to speak it forth *now*, in that they were to live in the spirit of judgment day today. There are many allusions to Job in the New Testament; far more than may be apparent on the surface. Mt. 10:27

is one of them: "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 idea of God telling us things in the ear which we must then openly declare is surely looking back to Job's words in Job 42:5. "Darkness" is also a Job idea; the word occurs at least 30 times in the book. The final appearance of Yahweh in the darkness of the thundercloud was His reproof of Job's repeated suggestion that the darkness of sin somehow separated God from involvement with man. What Job was told out of darkness, he had to speak forth in the light. It seems that Job's spiritual growth is being picked up by the Lord and presented as our pattern. He does the same in Lk. 18:30, another of the allusions to Job in the New Testament, when He speaks of how each of us must give up house, wife, brethren and children for the Kingdom's sake, and then afterwards receive "manifold more in this time, and in the world to come...". This is exactly the position of Job (Job 42:10), and yet the Lord applies it to each of us.

*In light-* This verse is repeated in Lk. 12:3 but from a different perspective: "Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors shall be proclaimed upon the housetops". We are to preach upon the housetops what the Lord told us in the ear. But what *we* have spoken in the ear, or whispered, shall likewise be broadcast from the housetops. Nothing will be secret in the day of judgment, and so we are not to be secretive about our faith now. We are to live as if we are in the Lord's judgment day presence- because in essence, we are. For judgment is going on right now. John's take on light and darkness is that Jewish society was the darkness in which the light of Christ was shining (Jn. 1:5; 12:46). The Lord may therefore be implying that they were still partially in darkness, and into that darkness He had come and was showing them the light.

*What you hear in the ear-* The personal relationship which we have had with Christ will be very evident at the judgment. What we say to Christ in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be openly spoken by Christ at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness (Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will then be spoken out loud. But there is a related statement from the Lord: What we hear from Him in the ear, we must speak openly (Mt. 10:26,27; after the pattern of Isaiah in 22:14). Putting these passages together, we get the picture of us speaking to God through Christ, talking in His ear, as one might whisper something very personal into a friend's ear, in the darkness of our bedroom. And then the Lord whispers back in our ear, i.e. His revelation to us (through the word) is very personal and not perceived by others; but we must openly, publicly act upon it. And this private relationship we have with the Lord in our prayer life will then be revealed openly at the judgment. God told Samuel "in his ear" about Saul's future, and although the message must have been hard to relay to Saul, Samuel did so, on the housetop (1 Sam. 9:15,25). The similarities with the Lord's words are too close to be accidental. Surely He saw each of us as passing through the essential experience of Samuel. As we witness our relationship with Christ to an unspiritual world now, so He will speak openly of

us to God (Mt. 10:32; Rev. 3:5), Angels (Lk. 12:8) and to the world (Lk. 12:2,3). He will openly confess our name, i.e. our character and personality. What we have said to Him privately will be revealed in the light, i.e. in the Kingdom (Col. 1:12). Preaching on the housetops is built on the language of 1 Sam. 9:15,25, where God speaks in Samuel's ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. The Lord is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel's position; we hear the word of this world's salvation, the word about "the Kingdom" as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended- even if, as with Saul, we consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

The outcome of the judgment seat will be a reflection of our attitude to witnessing to others: "What you (the twelve disciples) hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops... *whosoever* therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 10:27,32). The Lord seems to go beyond briefing His men before they set off on their preaching mission; He goes on to say that in a sense, *whoever* follows their example will be confessed before the Father. Notice what He *isn't* saying: He isn't saying that if you're keen about preaching, this is the be-all-and-end-all of spiritual life, and this alone will guarantee your acceptance with God. He says that what we hear (i.e. believe) in the ear, our own very personal understanding and belief of the Gospel, must be spread abroad openly to others. Our salvation is through faith in God's absolute grace; but if it is *real* faith, we will preach it on the housetops, we simply can't keep the knowledge of *such* grace, such great salvation, to ourselves.

*Proclaim upon the housetops-* According to the Talmud (*Shabbat* 35b), it was the priests who were to proclaim the commencement of the Sabbath by blasts on the shophar from the housetops. Again, the Lord takes language appropriate to the professional religionists and applies it to His largely secular followers. All the time He was seeking to encourage them that *they* were to do this work. And the proclamation of the Kingdom is thus turned into a form of proclaiming a Sabbath of rest. Hebrews uses the language of the Sabbath concerning the Kingdom of God. The idea of teaching upon the housetops what we hear in the ear is language which surely alludes to how Isaiah and the prophets heard God's word in their ear and then taught it to others (Is. 5:9; 50:4). The idea was that the Lord's followers were not to see the prophets as pale faced, iconic figures- but to realize they were no less than them in their service of God and His Son.

10:28 *Fear not-* The Lord was quite clear that His followers should expect death and serious suffering for preaching Him. He perceived that fear of audience response would be a strong factor in the temptation not to preach Him. But He gave the reason for not fearing in :26- all shall be revealed at the day of judgment. Belief in the doctrine of final judgment therefore has huge impact upon life in practice- in this case, giving us strength not to fear the consequences of our witness. For many believers today, persecution unto death is not a likely consequence of witness; fear of slight embarrassment, being thought 'odd' for turning a conversation around, is a very small price. The Lord is asking us here to accept that witness for Him may well cost us death. If we accept that, accept it as part and parcel of the Lord's basic message, then our approach to witness will be quite different. Fear of audience response will no longer be a major factor, if we

have solemnly accepted that we are prepared to die for the sake of preaching the Gospel. Luke's record adds: "I say unto you *My friends*, Be not afraid of them..." (Lk. 12:4). If we are His friends, the friends of the Son of God, the prince of the kings of the earth- why fear audience response when we witness? The labored assurances of the next verses about being of more value than sparrows etc. are all in the context, therefore, of assuring us that we need not ultimately fear negative response to our witness.

*Soul*- It is our 'real self' which will eternally endure. In this sense, for the faithful, their body may be killed but their soul cannot be. I take this to mean that who they essentially are is for ever recorded by the Lord, and they will be given that same personality at the resurrection.

Significantly, the Bible speaks not of the 'resurrection of the body' [it's the creeds which speak of this], but rather "the resurrection of the just", "the resurrection of the dead". The resurrection is more about resurrected characters than resurrected bodies, although the process will involve a new body being given.

*Destroy*- See on 16:25 *lose it*.

*Both soul and body*- The inference can be drawn that the rejected will have both soul and body destroyed at the last day. This means there must be a resurrection of the body- and then the destruction of that body in the condemnation process, as well as of their "soul". *Psuhe* has a wide range of meaning- sometimes it can mean simply the body, at other times, the essential personality. This too will be destroyed, for the memory of the rejected will be forgotten, they will cease to exist in all dimensions. There should be a "fear" of rejection; there are more details, more frequently, about the condemnation experience than the joy of acceptance in that day. This is not negative psychology; the Lord in His wisdom knew that this was necessary for us, to keep ever before us the sense of the future we may miss. This should be our fear, far more than death or social rejection by those to whom we witness.

*In Gehenna*- The Jews believed that 'hell' had three sections: Gehenna, a place of eternal fire for those Jews who broke the covenant and blasphemed God; 'the shades', an intermediate place similar to the Catholic idea of purgatory; and a place of rest where the faithful Jew awaited the resurrection at the last day. This distinction has no basis in the Bible. However, it's significant that the Lord Jesus uses 'Gehenna' and the figure of eternal fire to describe the punishment of people for what the Jews of His day would've considered incidental sins, matters which were far from blasphemy and breaking the covenant – glancing at a woman with a lustful eye (Mk. 9:47), hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1,5; Mt. 23:27–33), not giving a cup of water to a "little one", forbidding a disciple of John the Baptist to follow Jesus (Mk. 9:39–43); not preaching the Gospel fearlessly and boldly (Mt. 10:25–28). These matters were and are shrugged off as of no eternal consequence. But just like the prophets of Israel did, the Lord Jesus seizes upon such issues and purposefully associates them with the most dire possible punishment which His Jewish hearers could conceive – Gehenna. Time and again, the Bible alludes to incorrect ideas and reasons with people from the temporary assumption those ideas might be true. The language of demons, as we



will show later, is a classic example. And it's quite possible the Lord is doing the same here with the concept of Gehenna – the punishment for the Jew who breaks the covenant and blasphemes. The Lord was primarily teaching about behaviour, not giving a lecture about the state of the dead. And so He takes the maximum category of eternal punishment known to His audience, and says that this awaits those who sin in matters which on His agenda are so major, even if in the eyes of the Jewish world and humanity generally they were insignificant.

10:29 *Two sparrows*- “An inscription of the Emperor Diocletian setting out the maximum prices that might be paid for various articles of commerce shows that sparrows were the cheapest of birds used for food...” (3). This is another example of the Lord's radical collision course with the Rabbis; He taught that God's care even embraces sparrow. For the Rabbis explicitly forbade prayers that mentioned God's care for birds, because they argued that it was dishonouring to God to associate Him with something so small as a bird (*Berith* 5.3). And the Lord purposefully stood that idea upon its head. The Rabbis had a whole list of unforgivable sins, like murder, apostasy, contempt for the Law, etc. But the Lord went further. His many words of judgment weren't directed to the murderers and whores and Sabbath breakers; they were instead directed against those who condemned those people, considering themselves righteous. He calls those who appeared so righteous a 'generation of vipers'. The publican, not the Pharisee, finds God's acceptance, according to Jesus. And again, the Lord is making a telling point- because Rabbis held that repentance for publicans was almost impossible, because it was impossible for them to know exactly all the people they'd cheated. Very clearly, the Lord's message was radical. He was out to form a holy people from whores and gamblers, no-good boys and conmen. And moreover, He was out to show that what God especially judges and hates are the things that humanity doesn't think twice about: hypocrisy, self-righteousness, judgmentalism, exclusion of others...

*Assarion / farthing*- The tenth part of a drachma / denarius, which was a day's pay for a labourer. The Matthew record has the Lord saying that two sparrows are sold for one farthing; Luke 12:6 records that He said that five sparrows were sold for two farthings. So what did the Lord really say? I suggest something like this: 'As you know, two sparrows are sold for one farthing, they cost half a farthing each; but often, as you know, *five* sparrows are sold for *two* farthings, they'll throw one extra in for free, they're worth so little'.

*Shall not fall*- One sparrow "shall not fall on the ground without (the knowledge of) your Father". God is aware of the death of each bird- He does not allow animals to die due to their natural decay (the clockwork mechanism) without Him being actively involved in and conscious of their death. Again, Jesus shows how God's knowledge and participation in the things of the natural creation must imply an even greater awareness of us. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered... you are of more value than many sparrows" (Mt. 10:30,31). God hasn't wound up this world and left it ticking by clockwork, dispassionately looking on as Israel and all His people make such a mess of things. He sends the rain, consciously; not a sparrow falls from the

air [i.e., as the result of a man's sling stone- for birds die in their nests usually, not in mid-flight] without Him being aware, and, by implication, grieving for it. He even knows how much sparrows are sold for. See on 6:26.

*Fall to the ground-* The Lord was “the word made flesh”. All that He taught, He in some way experienced and obeyed. In the time of His persecution and death, He fell to the ground literally (same words- Mk. 14:35) as well as figuratively (same words Jn. 12:24); and called out to the “Father”. Clearly He had in mind His own earlier teaching; but how hard and demanding it was for Him to live it out.

10:30 *Hairs-* see 2 Sam. 1:23.

All numbered- The redeemed are a community whom man cannot number (Rev. 7:9), as many as the stars in the sky which neither Abraham nor any man could number. The Lord may be making an allusion to this in order to highlight the scale of knowledge which God has- He numbers the community of believers exactly, over space and over time, and He also numbers the hairs on every one of His people. This vast knowledge of God is often referred to in the Psalms as a guarantee that therefore God will ultimately protect His people. Lk. 21:18, which we have shown to have similarities with the preaching commission of Mt. 10, comments that “there shall not an hair of your head perish”. The question is whether the Lord is assuring His preachers that they will not ultimately die; it might sound like it, from such assurance. And yet earlier verses in the preaching commission sound as if the preachers will indeed suffer, quite possibly unto death. And we know that some of them did suffer death. So what are we to make of these assurances of protection, so strong that the preacher should be fearless and not fear death as a consequence for preaching? I suggest that the Lord, as often in His teaching, is speaking on an elevated, spiritual level. The possibility of death for witness is a clear theme of His, especially in Revelation. These strong assurances of protection and salvation from death would therefore be His way of saying that His ultimate salvation of His preachers at the resurrection will involve the preservation of them as unique personalities, down to the hairs of their head. And therefore they should not fear death in this life. For He knows them. The fear of death revolves around the sense that I as the sum of all my experiences, my uniqueness, shall be no more- and the Lord is urging us to believe that God not only knows our unique attributes better than we do, but shall ultimately preserve them in the resurrection of the body and in the nature of the life eternal.

10:31 Fear not therefore- The Lord is asking a lot here; He's asking for us to preach without fear of consequence and audience reaction. That is a step beyond preaching knowing the likely price, and being willing to pay that price. To know that price and yet preach without fear is a step beyond being willing to accept consequence.

More value- The same word is used in the same context in Mt. 6:26. Having spoken of how God provides for the birds of the air, the Lord drives home the comparison: “Are you not much better [s.w. “of more value”] than them?”. The term is again used in Mt. 12:12: “How much then is a

man better than a sheep”. We must give full weight to this triple emphasis on how much more valuable we are than the mortal animals whom God is so careful for. The request that we do not fear is repeated and labored throughout the section. It is fear of what others think and may do which so often holds us back from witness, be it to family members or literally approaching people on the street. With such labored assurances, we are to overcome fear and “therefore” preach openly- this is the force of the “therefore” in :32.

10:32- see on 10:27.

Therefore- See on :31 “more value”. The sense here is ‘accordingly’- in accordance with the colossal emphasis upon not being held back one bit by fear of consequence, we are to accordingly confess Christ before men. The requirement not to fear but to confess is so strong that it could be called a first principle of the Lord’s teaching. We are to be fearless in witness.

*Confess*- Confessing Christ before men can also be an allusion to baptism, not just bucking up the courage to give someone a tract at work (Mt. 10:32 = Rom. 10:9,10). This allusion is confirmed when we realize that “confess” translates two Greek words, ‘to confess in’. We confess in Christ by baptism into Him. In another sense, our witness is because we are in Christ, we are Him to the world, and therefore His fearlessness unto death in witness should be ours. The Lord spoke of how if we confess Him before men, He will confess knowledge of us before the Father; and if we deny Him, He will deny us. This language is applied by John to John the Baptist- for he comments that John the Baptist "confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ" (Jn. 1:20). In this sense, John Baptist is being set up as our example in preaching- and again, John comments that we too are to confess the Son and not deny Him (1 Jn. 2:23), after the pattern of John the Baptist. And yet note what John's 'confession' was- it was a profession of his unworthiness, that although he was the herald of the Christ, he was not Jesus. Again, we see here a pattern for our witness to the Lord. Eph. 6:15 speaks of our each being 'sandaled' with the preparation of the Gospel. Who prepared the way of the Lord by preaching, wearing sandals? John the Baptist. It seems Paul is alluding to John here, setting him up as the preacher's example. The reference to "loins girt" (Eph. 6:14) would also be a John allusion- the record twice (in Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6) stresses how John had his 'loins girded'.

When He says He will confess *us* before the Father, He means He will confess *our name* before God (Rev. 3:5); He knows us according to our names / characters. He speaks of ecclesial members as "names" in Rev. 3:4; He calls His own sheep by name, and they each know His voice, responding to His word *individually*. The call to one sheep will only be recognized by that sheep; the others won't respond (Jn. 10:3). He will take individual note of each sheep, treating them accordingly, as the shepherd leads more gently those that are with young (Is. 40:11). It seems that even now, we each have our own individual name with the Father and Son, encompassing their understanding of our essential character. It may even be that in the record of

Scripture, God inspired the writers to record the names of individuals according to His judgment of them (or at least, how the faithful viewed them at the time), rather than by the names they actually went under. What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil, Num. 1:15), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names.

*Confess [in]*- The same two words are found in Rom. 10:9 “If you shall *confess with* your mouth the Lord Jesus... you shall be saved”. The idea of *homolegeo* seems to be of public confession; literally to *homo-logos*. The Lord has just used the word *logos* with reference to the “words” of our preaching before men (10:14). *Homo* has the sense of being together with others. It can carry the sense of ‘assent’, in that our *logos* comes together with the *logos* of another; but the majority of NT usage is clearly with the sense of professing, making our *logos* before others. At the day of judgment, the Lord will “profess” His verdict to men (Mt. 7:23) and here we learn that He will “profess” it to His Father too. The weight of evidence on the basis of usage is that this word refers to public profession of a *logos*, of our innermost thought- which is exactly in line with the themes of the Sermon on the Mount: that our internal thought and position, our *logos*, is crucially important; but if it is a Christ-like *logos* then it will be impossible to conceal it, it must naturally become public, for a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Consider the evidence:

- Herod *confessed* [AV “promised”] with an oath” in front of witnesses to give Herodias’ daughter whatever she wished (Mt. 14:7)

- John the Baptist *confessed* in his preaching (Jn. 1:20)

- If anyone *confessed* openly that Jesus was Messiah, then they would be cast out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22; 12:42)

- The Pharisees *confessed* their doctrinal positions, i.e. they openly taught them (Acts 23:8)

- Paul *confessed* his beliefs publically when on trial (Acts 24:14)

- Timothy *confessed* his confession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12)

- Some openly *confess* their knowledge of God when their private lives don’t match that public confession (Titus 1:16)

- The faithful *confessed* their faith in God’s promises before all (Heb. 11:13)

- Teachers *confess* a doctrinal position about Jesus in their teaching and must be assessed by their audience accordingly (1 Jn. 2:23; 4:2,3,15; 2 Jn. 7).

In Matthew 10, the Lord uses the word in the very context of the need to openly witness. He who refuses to make this public profession will not be accepted in the day of judgment; the Lord Jesus will not confess such a person before “My Father”. Rom. 10:9,10 likewise predicate salvation upon this public confession. And the contrast in Matthew 10:32,33 is between *confessing* Christ and *denying* Him before men, leading to being *denied* by Jesus before “My Father”. Without doubt, 1 Jn. 2:23 has all this in mind when teaching that “Whosoever *denies* the Son, the same has not *the Father*, but he that *confesses* [s.w.; AV “acknowledges”] the Son has the Father also”. Taken together, these usages of *confession* present a solid case- that

salvation is related to public confession. That is not to say that salvation is by works, nor is it to say that evangelism is the be all and end all of the Christian life- after all, we all have different gifts, some are more pastoral than evangelical. Salvation is by grace *through faith*; and if we believe, then we cannot be passive, we become a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. Otherwise, as the Lord teaches several times in the Sermon on the Mount, we have not really believed in God's grace. The Sermon teaches that there is no such thing as a secret Christian, a candle lit which nobody else sees or gets a hint of. The absolute necessity of public confession was taught throughout the Sermon, and it is being made plain again here in Mt. 10 and throughout the other references to confession. In this area particularly, we are faced with the temptation of sins of omission- to consider that we are believers because we have mentally assented to certain theological propositions about Christ, but not making any public commitment or confession about them. No wonder the Lord raised this theme in encouraging His preachers to go forth fearlessly.

*Confess also*- The "also" suggests there will be a direct correlation between our confessing of Him before men now, and how He speaks of us before the Father both now and in the last day. The same idea is found in the way in which He earlier taught that we are forgiven *as* we forgive others. What's going on in Heaven concerning us need be no mystery to us- because it is a direct reflection of our lives of forgiveness, witness etc. in this world. The future judgment seat will be only a bringing to earth of the judgment seat which even now is going on in Heaven. Mt. 10:32 surely also has in view the Lord's speaking to the Father in Heaven right now, in this life. But compare the parallel Lk. 12:8: "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God". Of what does this speak? Surely of the last judgment [note the reference to the "Son of man", a term usually used about judgment to come; and denial before the angels surely equates with the "I never knew you" of the final judgment]. The events of the last day, with the Lord confessing or denying us before the Father and the Angels, are actually going on this very day.

10:33 *Deny Me*- The whole purpose of the true church is to be a light to the world- "the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members", as William Temple put it. The Lord will tell some in the last day that He never knew them, He will deny them; and yet He will deny those who never confessed Him before men (Mt. 8:23; 10:32,33). These people will have prophesied in His Name [i.e. preached to the ecclesia], and done "mighty works" for Him; but the fact they didn't confess Him before men is seen as not knowing Him; for to know Him is to perceive that we are intended to confess Him before men. This, perhaps, is our greatest danger. The presence and witness of God is no longer in a tent in the Sinai, nor in a Jerusalem temple. God reveals Himself through the group of ordinary, mixed up folks who comprise the ecclesias. For the watching world, we present proof that Christ is indeed alive; we provide the visible shape of what God and Jesus are really like. This is how vital is the matter of

witness. It is utterly fundamental to the whole purpose behind our having been called. If we deny Christ, we deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22); and yet we deny Christ if we don't preach Him (Mt. 10:33). It follows that if we really believe that Jesus was not just Jesus of Nazareth but the Christ of God, therefore we won't deny Him but will preach Him. This is why there is connection between confessing Jesus as Christ and preaching Him (Jn. 9:22; Acts 18:5; Phil. 2:11). A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1).

There are at least three Biblical examples of people denying Jesus- the same Greek word is used- and yet repenting. Peter denied the Lord "before all" (Mt. 26:70), and yet was restored. The entire crowd around Jesus, including the healed woman, initially 'denied' they had touched Jesus (Lk. 8:45); but the woman then came out into the open and confessed Christ before all. The Jews 'denied' Christ (Acts 3:13,14) but then repented and were baptized publically. The point is, that in the moments when we deny Him, He denies us; but we can change the situation.

It's tempting to wonder whether all this talk of confession and denial is only really relevant to those standing trial for their Christian faith, with the threat of death before them and the possibility of saving their life if they make some symbolic denial of Christ. But the words for confessing and denying occur together in Tit. 1:16 about those within the ecclesia who "Profess [s.w. 'confess'] that they know God, but in works *deny* Him". We can make the profession of faith before men, and in the public confession of baptism- whilst effectively denying the faith in our lives. There were some within the ecclesias of the first century who 'denied' the Lord (2 Pet. 2:1). External membership can appear as 'confession', but the point is that it isn't necessarily. It can actually be a front for denial of Him...

*Before men... before My Father which is in Heaven-* There is a direct correlation between our attitudes to witnessing before men now, and the attitude of the Lord Jesus about us in Heaven "before", or 'before the face of', the Father. Witnessing is essentially personal, each of us individually "before men". As modern life progresses in reducing relationships to online abstractions, we must remember this. An individual may press the right keys on their keyboard, send money online to a preaching organization- and yet never be making any witness about Christ before the faces of men. Indeed, those with whom the person does have face to face relationships may well be totally unaware he is a Christian. It's this kind of thing which the Lord is addressing in such demanding terms- our witness *before men*, not in some anonymous world of avatars, is related to how we witnesses about us *before the face of God in Heaven*.

10:34 *Come to send peace-* The Lord surely has in mind what He has just commanded in 10:13, where He uses the same words to describe how the apostles were to let their *peace come* upon the households they entered- the peace of *shalom* with God, the salvation of Jesus. But that peace

could return to them unclaimed, and the Lord's words here in :34 seem to imply that He is warning them that generally, their message of peace will not be accepted. In the exposition of 10:13,14 I suggested that the households being visited were those who had initially responded to the message about Jesus as preached by John. The sad reality was that many of these did not further respond to the peace offered to them in Christ.

*Peace on earth-* An allusion to the prophecies of peace in the Messianic Kingdom, and to the Angelic proclamation that there would be peace on earth through Christ (Lk. 2:14). The disciples were prone to be influenced by Jewish expectations and hopes for an imminent Messianic Kingdom to be established. The Lord's point is therefore surely that they were not to preach a gospel of immediate peace on earth, but rather one to come in the future; He made the point later that He had come to take peace from the earth (Rev. 6:4), but of course He offered *peace with God* through forgiveness and reconciliation which He would achieve through His life and death (Col. 1:20).

*Came not to send peace-* The context is the Lord telling His preachers to 'come' to households and pronounce the 'coming' [s.w.] of peace (10:13). But He is warning them that the potential will typically not be realized; only a few individuals within those households would accept the message, and effectively they were going to be breaking up those households because of the total loyalty to Christ and the new household in Him which they were to demand. Their coming to those households was effectively His personal coming to them- for in the work of witness they were Him, just as we are too. Who wants to break up another's household? I found myself thinking about that after coming to realize the social and relational results of baptizing individuals into Christ in Moslem families and societies. We can only do so if we are utterly convinced that the only ultimate household worth belonging to is that in the body of Christ.

*A sword-* The *machaira* was really a dagger, suggesting interpersonal conflict and hatred. He wanted His preachers to be under no illusion as to the result of people accepting their message; there would be acceptance of it on a national level, the implication is that the Lord expected individuals to accept it, and to suffer in their relationships and family life as a result of it. This needs to be remembered in our preaching too. We are not offering an easy life now, of peace and happiness on all fronts- but rather peace with God and hope in the future Kingdom of God on earth.

10:35 *To set a man at variance against-* The single Greek word translated here is a form of the noun for 'two'. The division would be down one line, into two groups- the household of origin, and the household of Christ, where He was head of the household. Division within families, especially between sons and fathers, was seen as far more awful than it is today. But the offer of Christ to be Lord, to be our head, is so compelling and colossal in implication that there can simply be no other option than division, at least emotionally and psychologically, between those members of a household who accept Him as Lord and head, and those who will not. The

implications of what the Lord is teaching here outlaws any thought of marriage out of the faith; to consciously create a divided family from the start can only reflect a very low level of commitment to Him as Lord, Master and household head.

*Daughter... daughter in law-* As well as the son against the father. Why these specific examples? Perhaps the Lord envisaged the younger generation being more responsive than their elders. But maybe His point was that the younger members of an extended family were expected to obey the head of the household- and the good news of His Kingdom, His dominion over men and women, was that loyalty was no longer to be to the head of the family, but to Him. For He was offering men and women entrance into a new King-dom, where He was King and His dominion was accepted in the lives of those who accepted the Gospel of that Kingdom.

10:36 *Foes-* Jewish thought was that their enemies were the Romans, and Zechariah's song reflects this expectation- that Messiah was to save Israel from her foes (s.w. Lk. 1:71,74). The Lord is redefining things. The foes were no longer to be the Gentiles, but all those who rejected the Gospel. For a strongly family based society, this was an almost impossibly high bar to jump. But the implication was that those who accepted it would not be alone, but would be making the sacrifice in order to take their place in a new family. For those raised within believing households, the radical nature of the call to leave family is hard to appreciate. One can understand all the positive hopes and often unrealistic expectations held by those who do break with their families in order to come to Christ, and their difficulty in finding that many long established members within the new household are sceptical and highly critical of the community. The Lord's teaching about the cost of following Him in terms of loss of relationships must be given its full weight. Loss of relationships, especially family ones, is part of following Him in spirit and truth.

*Own household-* The use of "own" suggests that the believer was still to accept his or her unbelieving family as their own.

10:37 *Loves father or mother-* This is the language of Levi (Dt. 33:9), encouraging the disciples that they, secular men that they largely were, must consider themselves the new priesthood by whom Israel were to be taught and saved.

*Not worthy of Me-* We must supply something for the "Me"; the idea is surely that we are not worthy of His love and death for us, of *His* family, if we love *our* family members more than Him. The contrast is between "Me" and our earthly families. 'Worthiness' was an idea associated in the first century mind with families. We cannot be worthy of membership in His family if we choose to identify ourselves as members of our natural family first and foremost. On one hand we are never worthy of Christ, and yet He implies here that He does consider us worthy of Him *if* we respond. This is not the same as salvation by works in the sense that Paul later decries; it is salvation by grace through faith, but faith without works is dead. There must be some response.



The idea that we can never be worthy of Christ is therefore quite simply wrong, or at best poorly worded and inadequate. He speaks here of being worthy of Him by sacrificing family relationships; and being not worthy of Him by refusing to sacrifice them.

*More than Me- Huper* Christ means just that in the accusative, “more than” Him. But the idea of *huper* in relation to Christ is used many times in the NT concerning His death “for” or *huper* us. It would seem likely that the Lord had His death for us in mind at this point, for He goes straight on to speak of how we are to take up our cross and follow Him to His death on Golgotha (:38). The shift of thought towards the cross in :38 is more natural if we perceive that He is already thinking of it in :37 when speaking of our being worthy of ‘Him’, i.e. His death for us.

10:38 *His cross*- The context is about the preaching of the Gospel. It is not at all glamorous. We should be ready to die a martyr's death. That is the clear teaching here. The context before and after this teaching about the cross is of preaching the Gospel and suffering persecution and broken relationships because of it. This, then, is the sense in which the Lord foresaw many of us suffering for His sake. We are bidden carry His cross (Mt. 20:23; Gal. 6:12), and yet also our own cross (Mt. 10:38). In our cross-experiences, those times when there is no other Christian option but to shoulder it... *then* we know something of the cross of the Lord, and then He is actively aware of that small kindred between His cross and ours. He remembers how it was, and sees the commonality of feeling which we have attained.

*Not worthy-* Reflect on a Gospel parallel to see the huge importance of being a disciple of Jesus. In Mt. 10:38 the Lord says that whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow after Him, “is not worthy of me”. In Lk. 14:27 we have the same words, but concluded with “... the same cannot be my disciple”. To be a disciple of the Lord is to be worthy of Him. To seek to walk as He walked, to follow behind Him, is to be worthy of Him. The important thing is to follow, for all our stumblings, but at least to be in the way behind Him. I have made the point that the instructions regarding witnessing here have their equivalent in the Olivet prophecy, and they may particularly refer to our preaching just before the Lord's return. At that time especially, "a man's foes shall be they of his own household", and therefore "he that takes not his cross (then), and follows after Me, is not worthy". Our response to our trials then during the tribulation will effectively be our judgment seat.

Consider the contexts in which Christ spoke of taking up His cross:

- (1) In Luke 9:23-26 He tells the crowds that they have come to His meetings because of the intriguing miracles of the loaves and fishes. The Lord is saying: 'Don't follow me because of the loaves and fishes; take up my cross'!
- (2) The rich young man was willing to be obedient in everything apart from parting with his wealth. In this context, of asking the most difficult thing for him to do, Christ spoke of taking up His cross - in the man's case, giving up his wealth.
- (3) The command to take up the cross in Mt. 10:38 is in the context of Christ's description of the family problems which would be caused by responding to His word. Presumably some were

willing to follow Christ if they didn't have to break with their families; but Christ asks them to take up the cross in this sense.

In all of these cases people were willing to follow Christ - but only insofar as it didn't hurt them. They were unwilling to take on board the idea of consciously deciding to do something against the grain of their natures and immediate surroundings. Yet this is what taking up the cross is all about, and it is vital for our identification with Christ. It is very easy to serve God in ways which reinforce the lifestyles we choose to have anyway; it is easy to obey Divine principles only insofar as they compound our own personality. By doing so we can deceive ourselves into thinking that we are spiritually active when, in reality, we have never walked out against the wind, never picked up the cross of Christ.

10:39 Finds his life- The Lord must surely mean us to read in an ellipsis: 'Thinks he has found the meaning of life without Me'. For the Lord has just called the unsaved audience of His preachers "the lost" (10:6 s.w.).

Shall lose it- The Lord has just spoken of how God will "destroy" (s.w. "lose") the "soul" (s.w. "life") of those rejected at the last day (10:28). So here in :39 He is surely thinking of destruction of the 'soul' / "life" at the last day. Only those responsible to judgment will appear at the day of judgment; so the Lord's teaching here concerns those who have known Him, who are responsible to Him, but who are not totally committed to Him; those who think that despite their knowledge of Him, they can 'find their lives' without Him. See on 16:25 *lose it*.

*Loses*- The same Greek word is translated to destroy, to die, to mar, to cause to perish. Once again, this is not what we wish to hear- that we must do real damage to our human life, crucify it, if we are to share in the life of Jesus. 10:28 has just spoken of the destroying / losing of life in condemnation; perhaps the 'loss / destruction of life' is in self-condemnation. This would continue a major theme of the Lord's teaching- that those who condemn themselves in this life shall be saved from condemnation at the last day.

*Shall find it*- As we go up the spiral of spiritual growth, we will find the true life- perceive, see, realize (Mt. 10:39 Gk.) the real, spiritual life, as the wayward son "came to himself", he found himself, when he repented. The Lord had laboured the point that whoever seeks shall *find* (Mt. 7:7,8,14), and the context clearly is of spiritual things and salvation. The Lord spoke in Mt. 7 of *seeking* and finding, here He speaks of *losing life* in order to find it. The language of seeking and losing suggests a process, rather than some finely spoken, albeit genuinely intended, momentary statement of commitment to the Lord. The more we *seek* the things of the Kingdom, the more we will naturally lose our fleshly life. The loss of life the Lord has in view is clearly a process of "seeking" the things of His Kingdom- rather than the death of martyrdom. The taking up of the cross in the previous verse is the epitome of losing life... but the Lord intended it to be understood as a way of life, a sharing of the same road as Him ["following" Him], upon which dying is literally a way *of* life as well as the way *to* life. What in practice does it mean to 'lose life'? Issues concerning where we live, careers, food, the pleasures of this life, all become

eclipsed by the mission before us- of consciously dying, *in His service*. For the entire context here is about serving the Lord by sharing the Gospel with others, engaging fully with the mission the Lord intends for us. The context of the Lord giving His people work to do would suggest that the life which is ‘found’ is not only the life eternal at the last day, but is the life in His service. This kind of life will be eternally lived, and it is in that sense that we can understand the Lord’s words elsewhere that those who follow Him right now begin living the eternal life, the kind of life in His service which they will eternally live. If we are ever seeking to balance and arrange things so that we can apparently live our fleshly life as well as ‘His’ life, then we have failed to grasp the entire point of His teaching. Total surrender, absolute and eager, willing submission, is what He is about.

10:40 *Receives Me*- The Lord is speaking of ‘receiving’ His preachers and materially supporting them (:13). He’s saying that every act of support given to them is done as it were directly to Him. He has the same idea in Mt. 25:35-45- whatever was done to “the least of these My brothers” was done to Him. His “little ones”, the disciples / preachers in their immaturity (:42), were all the same His, and whatever was done to them was done to Him and to His Father. We note that Mt. 25 speaks of material support of food, clothing, hospitality to the unknown and visiting in prison- all exactly in the context of the preaching mission He sent His disciples on. Whatever more general reference there may be in Mt. 25:35-45, clearly the primary reference was to the Lord’s future judgment of those who claimed to be His (who had accepted John the Baptist’s message), in accordance to whether or not they had materially supported the disciples on their preaching mission. Luke’s version of this teaching records that the Lord said that “He that *hears* you, hears Me” (Lk. 10:16). The ‘receiving’ was therefore of the message and therefore receiving the disciples personally (10:14 “receive you... hear your words”). We are the voice and face of Jesus to people- it’s a concept colossal in its implications. Our attitude to receiving or accepting each other is our acceptance or rejection of Jesus personally. Hence Paul tells the Galatians that they had “received me... as Christ Jesus” (Gal. 4:14), surely alluding to the Lord’s teaching here. We are to “receive one another, as Christ also received us” (Rom. 15:7).

The idea of *shaliach*, whereby someone’s representative was seen as them, was well known in Judaism; the Lord is almost quoting it here, and He does the same in the next verse. Realizing this is going on is a key to correct interpretation of the next verses.

10:41 This is a quotation of well-known Jewish thinking. I have shown multiple times in this commentary that the Lord was seeking to encourage His followers that they were no less than Moses, the prophets and the “righteous men” of the Old Testament. The context here is encouraging them that they are worthy labourers, worthy to receive material support from those they stay with. The ‘receiving’ of them on their preaching mission (:13) is the ‘receiving’ the Lord now has in view. His idea is that just as those who received Old Testament prophets will receive a prophet’s reward at the last day, possibly ‘from the prophet’ as the Greek could mean-

so just as much those who materially support the disciples will be rewarded. Such supporters will in no wise lose their reward (:42) – just as surely as those who supported Old Testament prophets will be rewarded, to no lesser extent, those who supported the disciples would likewise be rewarded.

10:42 *Cold water*- Giving a cup of cold water to the little ones doesn't necessarily refer to sticking banknotes in a collection for Oxfam. The Hebrew writer took it as referring to our love for Christ's little ones, within the ecclesia (Mt. 10:42 = Heb. 6:10). And the context says the same. The Lord was inviting the disciples to see themselves as none less than the likes of Elisha, who were supported in their work by various well-wishers.

*These little ones*- According to the interpretation of :41, these “little ones” refer to the disciples. But why “*these* little ones” and not “you”? I suggest that verse 42 is effectively a soliloquy, perhaps spoken out loud in the presence of the disciples, but all the same, it is Jesus speaking to Himself.

## Notes

- (1) See references to the Jewish laws in W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) Vol. 2 p. 183.
- (2) Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963) p. 192.
- (3) Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Leicester: I.V.P., 1992).