

The Disciple's Instructions

Matthew 10:24—37

As Jesus was instructing His Disciples the Tribulation was right around the corner, at least according to prophecy. The Tribulation will introduce the antichrist to the world who will deceive Israel into believing he is their Messiah who has come to deliver them from her enemies (Matthew 24:11, 24). The antichrist will give Israel the peace she was promised (Isaiah 54:10—14) and so longs for. The signing of the peace treaty signals the beginning of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27). Most Israelites will accept the antichrist as their Messiah and many will be drawn into the land of Israel from around the world. Those who reject the “Messiah” will come under intense persecution and many of these believers will be persecuted and put to death even by family members (Matthew 10:21). There will be a great divide in Israel with evil portrayed as good and godliness portrayed as evil.

Setting expectations (verses 24—31)

With this in mind, the instructions Christ gave to the Disciples in Matthew 10 make perfect sense. They are to expect to be persecuted and hated because Christ was hated. If the master is persecuted his followers should expect the same. Even before the Tribulation began the leaders of Israel were calling good evil by accusing Christ to be Beelzebul or the ruler of demons (Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22). This shows how far the leaders of Israel were from God.

The Disciples are told that they are not to fear men but to fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell. The power to do so rests on the Father. Instead of fearing men the Disciples are told to boldly proclaim whatever Christ has taught them. What He tells them in secret is to be shouted on the rooftops. Knowing the great love the Father has for them should embolden them to be a witness of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Since the Father knows when a sparrow falls He will know the trials the Disciples are going through and He cares so much more for His Disciples than the sparrow. It is because of this that they are not to fear, even to the point of death.

Confess and Deny (verses 32—33)

To confess literally means to say the same thing and has the idea of being in agreement. Those who confess Jesus are those who are in agreement with Jesus that He is the Christ. To deny is to reject or decline. In this case the words indicate an embracing or rejecting of the person Jesus Christ. Those who believe in the person of Jesus Christ as Messiah will be accepted before the Father while those who deny Jesus will be rejected by the Father.

Notice they are responsible to believe in the person of Jesus Christ only. When Peter confessed Jesus in Matthew 16:16 he said He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Martha believed the same thing and confessed that Jesus was the Christ (John 11:27). When they believe that Jesus is the Christ they are saying He is their Messiah (John 1:41). They were not required, as we are today, to believe in Christ's death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1—4). The Gospel of the Kingdom required belief in the person of Jesus Christ as Messiah. In this age of grace we need to believe not only in the person of Jesus Christ but also His work on the cross. This is not just an addition to the Gospel of the Kingdom but is a whole new Gospel. The good news of the Kingdom was about the Kingdom being at hand while the good news of the gospel of the grace of God is that God has poured out His grace on mankind in place of His wrath. Those who see no distinction between Israel and the Church the Body of Christ will not distinguish between the two Gospels. They see only one people of God throughout history and see only one Gospel preached. They are also constrained to spiritualize the concept of a Kingdom by seeing it as an invisible assembly of believers from all ages instead of a physical, political, literal, earthly kingdom with Christ sitting on the throne ruling with the 12 Disciples (Matthew 19:28). Since much of the Old Testament contains prophecy

concerning the future Kingdom, those who see only one Gospel will have to take these passages allegorically or metaphorically and reinterpret them to remove their literalness.

Those who confess or deny Jesus is Messiah, the Son of God will be accepted or rejected by the Father as they are accepted or rejected by the Son. Those who come to the Son will be accepted by the Father. This is one of the ways John shows believers of that day and Tribulational saints how to discern who is a believer and who is parading as a believer (1 John 4:2, 3, 15; 2 John 1:7). According to Luke 12:8 and Revelation 3:5 those who confess Jesus is Messiah will be confessed before the Father and before angels. Angels had an important role with the formation and ministration of Israel. When the Law was given to Israel at Mount Sinai it was done through the ordinance of angels. The angels were the ones who gave Israel the Law (Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:38, 53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2). Angels will also be involved in Israel's final days as they are directed to pour out judgment on them and the world in response for rejecting the Law and the Son.

The Body of Christ does not come under the ministry of angels nor do we come under the judgment of the Law. We, in the Church, the Body of Christ, are sealed by the Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13) and are blameless (Colossians 1:22). We will not experience God's wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). According to Romans 10:9 those who confess that Jesus is Lord (believe in the person of Jesus Christ) and believe He was raised from the dead (believe in His work) will be saved. This is the gospel outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1—4.

Jesus, Man of violence? (verses 34—37)

How many times have you heard a sermon about Jesus coming not to bring peace but to bring a sword? How could a Jesus that preaches love and says the peacemakers will be called the children of God now say He did not come to bring peace? Isn't this doing the same thing that other religions preach (Islam)?

The preaching of the Kingdom brought disharmony and turbulence. It separates believer from non-believer and upsets the status quo. People in Israel will need to take sides and when they choose to follow Christ they will be persecute because we are looking at a spiritual battle. With the Tribulation right around the corner this battle is intensifying. Those in Israel who are deceived to accept the antichrist as their Messiah will label rejecters as heretics and will view them as Paul (Saul) did the Christ-followers of his day. They will be persecuted and put to death by those who are zealous but without knowledge (Romans 10:2). Christ does not preach violence but knows that what He is preaching will bring division and violence. The reference to the sword is not a "sword of the will" as some would say but is a literal sword to be used in self-defense during the Tribulation. This is why the Disciples were told to sell his garment to buy a sword (Luke 22:36). Just before going to the Mount of Olives to be arrested the Disciples said they had two swords and Jesus said that would be enough in spite of Him telling them that they all needed to have swords. This is because the swords were for the Tribulation and not to be used before. When Peter used the sword to cut off the ear of Malchus Jesus told Peter to put the sword away because it wasn't the right time to use it (John 18:10—11).

Another problem is the idea that they were commanded to love Christ more than their family. Luke 14:26 strongly states they are to hate their family in order to be Christ's disciple. When taken at face value and carried out today there are those who wrongly leave their families to preach Christ. When taken in context and with the Tribulation in mind these saints needed to follow Christ at any price even if it meant they had to turn their backs on family members who are following the antichrist. Those who followed family instead of Christ would be those who did not endure to the end (Matthew 10:21). In contrast, Paul admonishes husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:22) and to nurture and admonish their children in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Wives are to submit to their husband (Ephesians 5:24) and be the keepers of the home (Titus 2:5). Those who do not provide for their families are worst than infidels (1 Timothy 5:8). In other words, we need to follow Paul's teaching under this age of Grace.

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