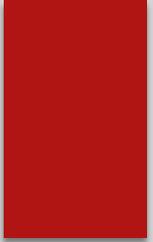




MATTHEW 10:25-42  
MESSIAH ON A MISSION  
(PART 20)  
“A Praxis Producing  
Theology”

**IS IT INCONCEIVABLE TO US THAT IF OUR  
MISSION IS TO MATCH JESUS' MISSION  
AND OUR AUTHORITY TO COMPLETE THE  
MISSION IS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE  
WORKS OF JESUS, THAT THE REACTIONS  
THAT WE RECEIVE WOULD MATCH THE  
RESPONSES THAT JESUS RECEIVED?**



**INTRODUCTION**

# Through the Fire

The Crabb Family

So many times I question the certain circumstances  
And things I could not understand  
Many times in trials my weakness blurs my vision  
And that's when my frustration gets so out of hand  
It's then I am reminded, I've never been forsaken  
I've never had to stand one test alone  
As I look at all the victories, the spirit rises up in me  
And it's through the fire my weakness is made strong

He never promised that the cross would not get heavy  
And the hill would not be hard to climb  
He never offered a victory without fighting  
He said help would always come in time  
Just remember when you're standing in the valley of decision  
And the advisory says give in, just hold on  
Our Lord will show up  
And he will take you through the fire again

The weakness and strength of a disciple is exemplified in these three areas:

DISCIPLES MUST BE WILLING TO SUFFER PERSECUTION (MATTHEW 10:25)

DISCIPLES MUST "NOT BE AFRAID" OF THE PERSECUTORS- I AM WITH YOU! (MATTHEW 10: 26-31)

DISCIPLES MUST OVERCOME ALL COMPETING ALLEGIANCES TO JESUS (MATTHEW 10:32-39)

# 1.) Disciples must be willing to suffer persecution (Matthew 10:25)

JESUS ALWAYS GIVES PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION AFTER HIS WARNINGS. (2 PETER 1:3)

THE WARNING (MT. 10:16-18), THEN THE INSTRUCTIONS (MT. 10:19-20);

THE WARNING (MT. 10:21-22), THEN THE INSTRUCTIONS (MT. 10:23-26).

THE DISCIPLE MUST BE LIKE HIS MASTER IN ENDURING PERSECUTIONS (MT. 10:25; JN. 15:18-20 MK. 10:30)

BECAUSE PERSECUTION IS A GUARANTEE FOR A TRUE DISCIPLE (2 TIM 3:12), (COMPARE, FOR EXAMPLE, MT 5:11-12; ACTS 5:41; 14:22; GAL 5:11; 1 THESS 3:3; REV 1:9) —THOUGH THESE ARE MOST APPLICABLE WHERE THE GOSPEL SERIOUSLY VIOLATES LONG-STANDING CULTURAL TRADITIONS.



## 2.) "Do Not Be Afraid" of the persecutors- I am with You! (Matthew 10: 26-31)

IN THE FACE OF WITHERING OPPOSITION JESUS' WORDS SEEM COUNTERINTUITIVE

"DO NOT BE AFRAID"

THE NATURAL REACTION IS TO FEAR THOSE WHO OPPOSE YOU OR THREATEN TO DO YOU BODILY HARM. JESUS WANTS HIS DISCIPLES TO HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT RESPONSE (10:26-31)

A RIGHT VIEW OF GOD SHOULD INFORM A DIFFERENT WAY OF UNDERSTANDING GOD AND LIVING OUT ONE'S LIFE

Jesus' three  
exhortations to  
not be afraid to  
draw from a right  
theological  
understanding

Disciples need not fear others who might harm them, since God will reveal all things in the end, including any injustice enacted toward saints (10:26).

You need not fear, for it is God, not others, who hold the power over their ultimate destiny (10:28).

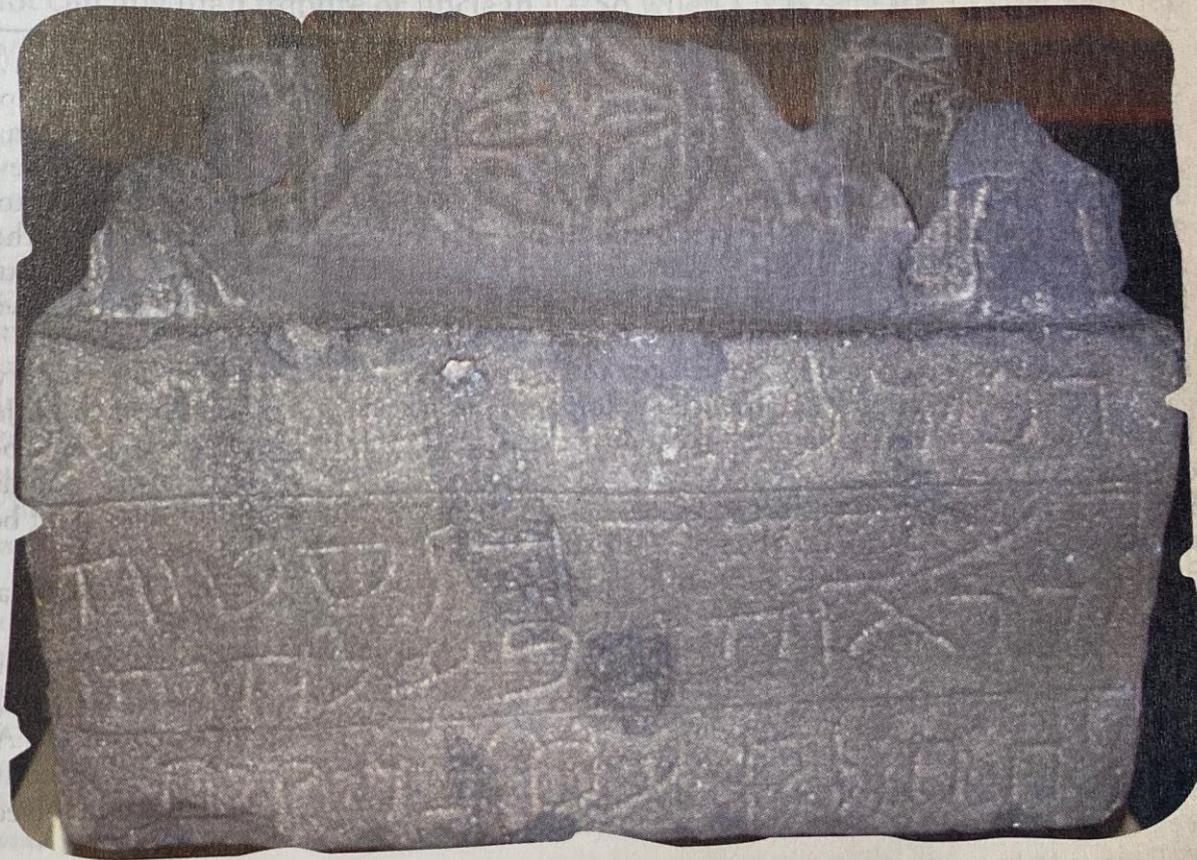
And you need not fear, because God cares for each disciple, so much so that “even the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (10:29–30).

### 3.) Disciples must overcome all competing allegiances to Jesus (Matthew 10:32-39)

The demands and expectations placed on a disciple by Jesus are absolute (10:39) Jesus presents us with only two alternatives: spare your life or sacrifice your life.

The only way Apostolic Pentecostal Christians can escape conflict is to deny Christ and compromise their witness, and to do this would be sin.

The world and even the mainstream religious world will never accept us.



**The "Seat of Moses" from the Chorazin Synagogue**

Preserving Bible Times; © Dr. James C. Martin; permission of The Israel Museum

We are to have a Praxis (way of acting and living) that is produced by our theology (beliefs about God). We are not to be as the pagan (ethnos/ethnikos; i.e., non-Jewish), because these pagan vs. Godly world views have already been juxtaposed when Jesus calls his disciples to live as “children of [their] Father in heaven” (5:45).

## FOOTNOTE 1

### CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

#### Ancient Synagogues

The earliest archaeological evidence of ancient synagogues derives from Greek inscriptions found in Egypt dating from the third century B.C., Although the synagogue as an institution dates from a much earlier time. Literary and epigraphic sources employ various terms for these structures, which indicate the range of functions for which they were used. The Greek term sometimes used, *proseuche*, literally “(a place of) prayer,” attests to the synagogue as a location for worship and communal prayer; this usage is found in the new testament (ac 16:13, 16). The later term *synagoge*, which eventually became dominant, means “a place of assembly” and suggests a range of corporate functions, most particularly the public reading, exposition and study of scripture.

The Theodotus inscription unearthed in the Jerusalem excavations of 1913–1914 describes the essential functions of a first-century A.D. Synagogue. This Greek dedicatory inscription mentions a certain Theodotus, the son and grandson of a priest and ruler of the synagogue (cf. Mk 5:35; Lk 13:14; Ac 18:8, 17), who constructed the synagogue “for the reading of the Torah and the teaching of the commandments.” The text also refers to guest rooms and accommodations for those traveling from abroad.

## FOOTNOTE 1 (cont.)

### CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

#### Ancient Synagogues

Ancient synagogues served as a central meeting place for local Jewish communities. The synagogue played a complementary role to the temple by providing a venue for local services of word and prayer, as well as a forum for communal assemblies, study, hospitality and even religious courts. Synagogues are mentioned in a wide variety of Jewish literary works. According to Talmudic sources there were some 480 synagogues in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the temple. Josephus (against Apion, 2.17) considered the public reading and learning of the Torah to be the essential element of the weekly synagogue service, a practice he perceived to have been ordained by Moses. Philo likewise referred to synagogues as schools at which the ancestral philosophy was taught (life of Moses, 2.39). The new testament corroborates this general picture (ac 15:21) and also presents numerous examples of reading and teaching scripture in synagogues by Jesus (mt 4:23; 9:35; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:16–21; Jn 6:59; 18:20), Paul (ac 9:20; 17:10; 19:8) and other early leaders (13:5; 14:1). Synagogues were typically built in close proximity to rivers or other bodies of water that could provide for the ritual washings required of those participating in the service (cf. Ac 16:13). Architectural styles of ancient synagogues varied considerably. In fact, the earliest synagogue meetings may have been held within large private dwellings, with synagogue buildings appearing as separate edifices approximately one century after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70. The building was usually oriented toward Jerusalem, perhaps reflecting the practice of praying toward this sacred city (cf. 1ki 8:44–48; da 6:10). The Torah ark (the box containing the Torah) represented the visual focal point of the synagogue, communicating a holiness flowing from the temple in Jerusalem. Synagogues are distinguished archaeologically by the presence of Jewish religious symbols such as the menorah (candelabrum), shofar (ram's horn) and a niche for the Torah. At a further stage of development, during the late roman and byzantine periods, biblical scenes and even characters were depicted in elaborate stone mosaics. Surprisingly, even astrological symbols appear in some mosaics. Spectacular examples of such mosaics have been uncovered in excavations at the synagogues of Beth Alfa, Gerasa, Hamath and Dura Europos.

## FOOTNOTE 2

### CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

#### The Early Persecution of the Church

Persecution was a fact of life for the early Christians. The book of Acts documents the martyrdoms of Stephen (ac 7) and James, the brother of John (ac 12:2), and describes Saul/Paul as breathing “murderous threats” against the church prior to his conversion (ac 9:1). Outside the holy land the frequent opposition of the synagogue Jews to Christianity was matched by growing concern among non-Jews. The staunch monotheism of the early Christians would have offended many pagans, who were accustomed to accommodating different gods from all over the world. When the livelihood of pagan religious practitioners was challenged by the testimony of the gospel, persecution was the consequence (ac 19). Early Christians were persecuted by Jews for claiming that Jesus of Nazareth was the messiah and by some Christian Jews for accepting gentile converts without requiring them to become Jewish proselytes, and they were criticized by gentiles for their monotheism (gentiles had accepted Judaism as a legitimate, if peculiar, religion and thus did not officially engage in persecution of Jews).

The central Christian confession “Jesus is Lord” was a particular problem in the Roman empire, because the affirmation of the sovereignty of Jesus was a direct challenge to the absolute rule of the Roman emperor. When the emperor or his representatives called for people to honor the emperor as a deity, Christians could not comply in good conscience. It was inevitable that the Christian’s allegiance to Jesus would trouble the Roman authorities, and the situation finally erupted under the emperor Nero in A.D. 64. Searching for a scapegoat for the fires that had plagued the city, Nero seized upon the Christians. The Roman historian Tacitus (annals, 15.44) reported that large numbers of Christians were arrested and killed; some were dressed in animal skins and torn apart by dogs, others crucified and set on fire to serve as outdoor lamps. The abuse was so severe that even those hostile to Christianity criticized Nero’s actions.

## FOOTNOTE 2 (cont.)

### CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

#### The Early Persecution of the Church

After Nero the persecution of the church appears to have been more sporadic. While the emperor Domitian is sometimes blamed for broad attacks upon the church, the evidence for such a wide-scale persecution during his reign is insubstantial. (Such systematic persecutions, however, did occur during the ensuing centuries up to the time of Constantine.)

Nonetheless, at least one martyrdom is reported in the book of revelation (that of Antipas in rev 2:13), with a strong implication that more deaths were coming. A few decades after Revelation was written, the Roman governor Pliny wrote to the emperor Trajan for instructions on the parameters for punishing confessed Christians. Although Trajan's reply focused on procedural matters and did not specify the extent of punishment, it is clear that Christianity was perceived as a serious threat to the social order of the early-second-century roman empire.

The early Christians no doubt experienced trouble for confessing their faith in their daily lives as well. In the province of Asia, for example, trade guilds would often adopt a pagan god as their patron. Meetings of the guild would thus have involved the worship of this deity, and Christians who refused to participate in that worship might have compromised their livelihood. Many scholars believe that this is the background to revelation 13:17, in which those who did not have the mark of the beast could neither buy nor sell. Ridicule from neighbours, family tensions and concern over government harassment no doubt contributed to the fear of mistreatment and worse for the early Christians.