

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
L. Christ's Directives On Facing Ministry Opposition
(Matthew 10:16-42)

I. Introduction

- A. After Christ gave His pastoral ministry assignment to His disciples, He provided extensive directives on facing ministry opposition, what will be fully applied by Hebrew servants of God in the Tribulation Period.
- B. Nevertheless, these directives are applicable in spiritual principle to facing opposition to ministry in the Church today, so we view Matthew 10:16-42 on this subject for our insight, application and edification:

II. Christ's Directives On Facing Ministry Opposition, Matthew 10:16-42.

- A. Jesus' instructions to His disciples in Matthew 10:16-42 were given in view of His offer of His Messianic Kingdom, the thousand-year reign of Christ that has yet to occur as predicted in Revelation 20:4-6.
- B. However, when Christ gave these directives, the Church era was still unrevealed (Ephesians 3:1-6), so the ultimate fulfillment of this passage will occur in the future Tribulation Period (Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 42).
- C. Nevertheless, the battle between God and Satan exists now as it will then, so the spiritual dynamics of our era are similar to those of the Tribulation, so we apply Christ's Matthew 10:16-42 message in principle to today:
 - 1. Christ's Matthew 10:16 claim that He sent His disciples out as sheep among wolves, requiring them to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, recalls a similar statement in the Hebrew Midrash, but there Israel is the sheep and the Gentiles are the wolves. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 194, citing A. Edersheim, The Life And Times Of Jesus The Mes., 1912, vol. 1, p. 645)
 - 2. However, Christ was sending disciples only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5-6), so like Paul predicted in Acts 20:29-30, we who disciple in the Church era will face spiritually dangerous wolves in our local churches, what requires us to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves right in our churches!
 - 3. Accordingly, those who disciple in today's churches must realize that they will be forcefully opposed, but that Christ's servants will need to rely on the Holy Spirit to know what to say and when to say it in crises with spiritual wolves, for God's Spirit will be speaking through them to counter such foes, Matt. 10:17-20.
 - 4. The opposition Christ's servants will face will involve even family members as they will face hatred from all men in general, but Christ's servants were to withdraw from such persecution, Matt. 10:21-23. Such opposition is what Christ's servants' Master had faced, so they would face the same, Matthew 10:24-25.
 - 5. Christ's servants need to be bold in their teaching and preaching and not fear what their foes might do to them, for God will hold everyone accountable for what they do to His servants, Matthew 10:26-28.
 - 6. Also, God knows all about every part of a believer's being, and He greatly cares about it all, so Christ's servants are to present God's truth without restraint due to their accountability to Him, Matthew 10:29-33.
 - 7. Christ's servants were to realize that God's goal in their ministries was not to produce harmony among all men, but to create division between the godly and the ungodly, even within family units, Matt. 10:34-36. Thus, Christ's servants and the godly who heard their messages were to love Christ more than even close family members, to take up their cross and lose their lives if required for righteousness' sake that they might find great blessing in the Lord, Matthew 10:37-39.
 - 8. In the end, God will judge all who hear His servants based on how they respond to those messengers, for how the hearers treat God's servants will reflect their attitude toward God Who sent them, Matt. 10:40-42.

Lesson: *Christ's directives to His disciples who were to preach of Christ's Kingdom, though applied more fully in the Tribulation since Christ would postpone His Kingdom when Israel rejected Him and institute the intervening Church era, are still spiritually applicable to Christ's servants in today's Church. Thus, we who disciple in the Church era must understand that (1) Christ has sent us out as sheep among spiritual wolves even in our local churches, so we must be wise as serpents but harmless as doves in the church. (2) In particular, (a) we must rely on the Holy Spirit for the words we are to say when we are opposed. (b) We will face opposition even from family members, so we should withdraw from them, knowing that our Master, Jesus faced similar trials. (c) We must not fear our foes, for God will hold them accountable for what they do, and God knows of our needs under persecution and cares about us so as to provide what we need to serve Him. (d) We must realize that God does not intend to make our ministries unite all men, but to separate the godly from the ungodly, so we must be willing to suffer in ministry for God's reward. (e) God holds all men accountable for how they treat us, so we must fulfill our mission.*

Application: *May we heed Christ's applicably spiritual principles on handling ministry opposition in serving Him.*