

serpents and innocent as doves. From Genesis 3:1 we learn that serpents were symbols of a craftiness. Satan took on the form of a serpent in order to deceive Eve. In other words the disciples were to be aware of the situation around them. They were to keep their eyes open and be mentally prepared for possible dangerous reactions. Yet they were to keep their hearts open and soft toward the people they served. Jesus was quite clear that the disciples were going to face tough times. However the question remains, why does God allow Jesus followers to suffer. Jesus told them that he was sending them out as sheep among wolves. Shepherds usually don't send their sheep into a dangerous situation without the presence of the shepherd. Every field in which the sheep ate grass was potentially dangerous, but with the shepherd present he could protect his sheep. While Jesus was sending his disciples into a very dangerous situation, he would also be right there with them. Although Jesus was not physically present, the presence of the Spirit was there for them to see people healed. If arrested they were not to worry, because the Holy Spirit would give them the words to say in that situation. Jesus would watch over them providing them with what they need, protecting them as necessary and the Spirit would sustain them spiritually.

### **Saturday, February 6, 2010**

*Daily theme: Difficulty will result in the spread of Jesus' message.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:21-23**

1. What would cause family members to betray one another?
2. Why is Jesus so offensive to men?

#### **Consider**

Fear often motivates men to do terrible things. In the Old Testament the fear of death by famine caused mothers to kill and eat their own children. It was probably fear that would drive brothers to betray one another, a father to turn against his children and the children to do the same toward their father. In our own time, family members have betrayed family members because of fear of persecution. In light of what Jesus says here, it is interesting that people often say how much they admire Jesus. If Jesus is admired so much why are Jesus' followers persecuted because of Jesus? Although people say they admire Jesus, Jesus is often offensive to people, because he challenges what they think and what they do. When Jesus' followers proclaim Jesus' message of repentance from sin to receive forgiveness they are sometimes persecuted. If a person has no desire to change his ways, then a peace loving and gospel proclaiming person will be perceived as offensive. Their presence and message will be a constant irritant. Eventually persecution results. Jesus concludes this section with a strange statement that students of the Bible have pondered. Perhaps the best interpretation is to take verse 23 as a prophetic statement, quite possibly referring to the period of time when the gospel would be proclaimed throughout the world in anticipation of Jesus' return. This prophecy began when Jesus sent out his disciples, but will not end until all nations of the earth hear the gospel and then Jesus will return (Matthew 24:14).

# Jesus' instructions for following him in a hostile world.

Matthew 10:1-23

*Sermon Series: What did Jesus teach?*

Devotional Notes February 1-6, 2010

### **Monday, February 1, 2010**

*Daily theme: Jesus chose ordinary men to do his work.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:1-4**

1. Why do you think Jesus chose 12 disciples and not some other number?
2. What information did Matthew give us about these 12 men?

#### **Consider**

Choosing twelve men to be disciples may seem like a random number, but it had a significant meaning. The number twelve was a historic number for Israel. There had been twelve tribes descended from the twelve sons of Jacob, Abraham's grandson. In Revelation 21 we read of a comparison between the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. When John saw the new Jerusalem descended from heaven to the new earth, he noticed that the city had twelve gates having the names of the twelve tribes on Israel. In addition, John observed that the city had twelve foundation stones with the names of the twelve apostles of Jesus (Revelation 21:10-14). So the decision of Jesus had both an historic and prophetic significance. Several of the men that Matthew listed as the twelve disciples, he had mentioned previously. Peter and Andrew were brothers and fishermen from Capernaum (Matthew 4:18). James and John were fishermen as well, who furthermore had also left their father to follow Jesus. (Matthew 4:21-22). We know from John 1:44 that Philip was from Bethsaida, which was also Peter and Andrew's hometown. Bartholomew was probably the man John called as Nathanael, who had been skeptical of Jesus because Jesus was from Nazareth. John also gives us more information regarding Thomas, who had been concerned about returning to Jerusalem after the news of Lazarus arrived (John 11:16). Later Thomas was concerned that he did not know where Jesus was going (John 14:5). After the resurrection, Thomas could not bring himself to believe that Jesus was really alive until he saw Jesus himself (John 20:24-28). Matthew was a tax collector in the employ of the hated Roman government and quite likely hated himself for becoming wealthy through corrupt means. We have little information regarding James the son of Alphaeus or Thaddaeus. Simon was identified as a zealot. The zealots were men dedicated to the overthrow of the Roman government. That means that Matthew and Simon would have been enemies, yet each was a follower of Jesus. The list concludes with Judas who is always identified as the one who betrayed Jesus. He was also the disciple who

opposed Mary when she anointed Jesus (John 12:4-6). This list of men reveals that Jesus chose men who were from ordinary and somewhat varied backgrounds. Many of them came from Galilee. What made these men extraordinary was their association with Jesus not their own accomplishments.

### **Tuesday, February 2, 2010**

*Daily theme: God's power comes freely so we can give freely.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:5-10**

1. Why would Jesus instruct his disciples to avoid the Gentiles and Samaritans?
2. What lessons would Jesus be teaching the disciples by telling them not to take gold, silver or extra items on their journey?

#### **Consider**

Having listed the twelve disciples, Matthew tells us what Jesus told them. By instructing them not to go to the Gentiles the disciples could not have gone north or east of Galilee because those regions were occupied by Gentiles. By prohibiting contact with the Samaritans, the disciples could not have traveled south which is where Samaria was. With his instructions Jesus effectively limited the disciples' travels to Galilee. In so doing, Jesus underscored his own purpose to seek out the Jewish people first. At a later time the Samaritans and Gentiles would hear of Jesus, but first the Jews of Galilee received the good news. Jesus also gave them instructions on what to bring. They were not to bring anything that they could use for their own support. They would be completely dependent upon the people that hosted them. In other words, Jesus forced the disciples to trust God to take care of them. They could not trust their own resources, because they wouldn't have any with them.

### **Wednesday, February 3, 2010**

*Daily theme: God protects and provides for his witnesses.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:11-13**

1. What do you think Jesus' purpose was in having his disciples stay with one family in each city?
2. What benefits would the host home receive in hosting the disciples?

#### **Consider**

Jesus' instruction to stay in a home was the common way of lodging when traveling. There were no Motel 6's or Holiday Inns in the first century. Travelers were invited into the homes of the community. Not to be hospitable to a guest was a serious breach of Oriental etiquette. Jesus used the normal means of lodging for his day. While the disciples would receive food and lodging, they were also instructed to give. They were to give God's blessing of peace to the home and family. That blessing would have been the Jewish word Shalom or peace. The

blessing revealed that the host home did not only give, but also received. The host received the blessing from the disciples as well as benefiting from the extra teaching that they could have received from extended contact with the disciples. While the host provided material blessing, the disciples gave the spiritual blessing back to the host family. Jesus' instructions revealed that it was not the disciples' place to evaluate whether the home was worthy of their blessing. They were to go and bless, God figured out the rest.

### **Thursday, February 4, 2010**

*Daily theme: God will judge those who do not receive his witnesses.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:14-15**

1. What does the action of shaking the dust of a place off of your feet refer to?
2. What do you think Jesus' point was in mentioning Sodom and Gomorrah?

#### **Consider**

There would be situations when the disciples would not be welcomed. Jesus warned them of this possibility. Nevertheless, they were to bless the house, God would determine whether the blessing would remain and be effective. It was not the disciples' decision whether the house deserved the blessing or not, they were to bless. However when it was clear that the home opposed them and their message, they were to shake the dust from that town off their feet. This was a custom of the Pharisees who determined that they would shake the dust off their sandals when they returned through Gentile territory. The disciples' action was a warning to the town that they had not accepted God's revelation. To communicate the seriousness of their mission and the importance for the people to receive them, Jesus spoke of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two cities had been warned by angels and Lot that judgment was at hand. Even so they chose to ignore Lot, who fled with the angels, while God destroyed the cities. Jesus used Sodom and Gomorrah as a means of communicating immorality and unbelief. Since someone greater than the angels gave the warning, then the people of the town should pay attention. When the disciples encountered opposition, the disciples were to take immediate action. They were to leave the city and as they went out to shake the dust off of their feet.

### **Friday, February 5, 2010**

*Daily theme: Jesus' witnesses will suffer for his sake.*

#### **Questions**

##### **Read Matthew 10:16-20**

1. What did Jesus mean by saying be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves?
2. Why would Jesus send his disciples into such difficult circumstances?

#### **Consider**

Jesus prepared the disciples with an unusual phrase. They were to be wise as