

# The Gospel of Matthew

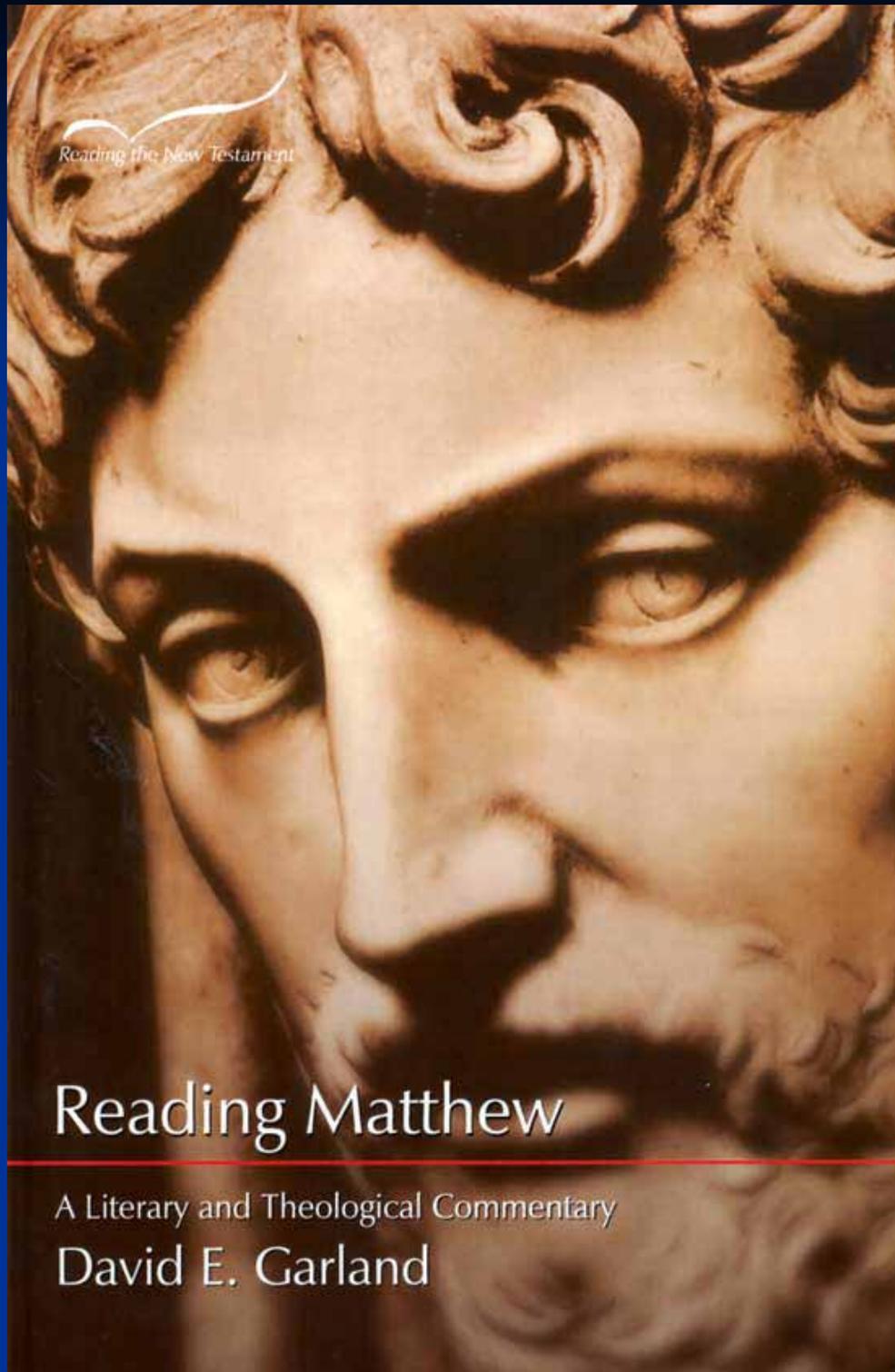
5.

Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—  
9:35). Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The  
Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)

**Sunday, January 8, 2006**  
**10 to 11 am in the Parlor.**  
*Everyone is welcome!*

*St. John in the Wilderness*

**Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours for ever.**



- **Reading Matthew. A Literary and Theological Commentary**, David E. Garland, Smyth & Helwys, 2001, ISBN 1-57312-274
- **David Garland** is Professor of Christian Scriptures and Associate Dean for Academic Services at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

# SACRA PAGINA

*Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Editor*



The Gospel of  
**MATTHEW**

*Daniel J. Harrington, S.J.*

- **Sacra Pagina. The Gospel of Matthew**  
Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1991, ISBN 0-8146-5803-2
- **Daniel Harrington** is Professor of New Testament at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
  - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
  - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
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    - The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)
    - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

# Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## Introduction

- After giving us a magisterial compilation of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (5:1—8:1), Matthew now shows us another side of Jesus: Jesus as healer.
- Matthew describes ten miracles of healing by Jesus (ten “mighty works”).

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## Introduction

- Three motifs interweave through these sections:
  - 1. The matchless power and authority of Jesus
    - Matthew prunes many details about the miracles found in other gospels, focusing instead on:
      - the suppliant's faith in Jesus in asking to be healed
      - Jesus' power and words in response to the request for healing
  - 2. Discipleship
    - Discipleship requires faith and confidence in the power of Jesus
  - 3. The response to Jesus' power and authority
    - Some proclaim him Lord, the Messiah, the Son of David
    - Others (some Jewish teachers) accuse him of blasphemy, of performing miracles through the power of the ruler of demons.

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## Introduction

- Three sections or units can be discerned:
  - 1. *First Unit, Matthew 8:2-17*, presents Jesus as a mighty healer and the incarnation of compassion
    - 8:1 — Jesus heals a leper
    - 8:5 — Jesus heals a Centurion's servant
    - 8:14 — Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law Mary at Peter's house

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## Introduction

- Three sections or units can be discerned:
  - *2. Middle Unit, Matthew 8:18—9:17*, focuses on discipleship, and the unprecedented nature of Jesus' ministry
    - 8:18 — Would-be followers of Jesus
    - 8:23 — Jesus stills the storm
    - 8:28 — Jesus heals the Gadarene Demoniacs
    - 9:2 — Jesus heals a paralytic
    - 9:9 — the call of Matthew
    - 9:14 — the question about fasting

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## Introduction

- Three sections or units can be discerned:
  - 3. *Last Unit, Matthew 9:18-34*, again presents Jesus as a mighty healer and the incarnation of compassion:
    - 9:18 — Jesus restores Jairus' daughter to life
    - 9:27 — Jesus heals two blind men
    - 9:32 — Jesus heals one who was mute

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Jesus the Healer

## *First Unit. Jesus Heals a Leper*

- Jesus comes down the mountain where he has just given the Sermon on the Mount, and a leper comes and kneels before him.
- The leper addresses Jesus: “**LORD, if you choose you can make me clean**”
- Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the leper, healing him instantly.

**Matthew 8:2-4**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals a Leper

- To understand this miracles and those that follow, we must suspend all our modern knowledge of medicine, of what causes illness and how it must be treated.
- Illness was not thought of as an organic malady, but as something that today we would call “supernatural.” Illness was:
  - A chastisement by God for sin, or
  - Caused by an evil power or demon.

**Matthew 8:2-4**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals a Leper

- Many skin diseases were called “leprosy” not just the modern disease that bears that name.
- The term “leprosy” was also used for conditions involving clothes (Lev. 13:47-48) and houses (Lev. 14:34-53).
- A sufferer of leprosy was a transmitter of impurity, a “father of uncleanness.”
- A leper was considered a “living corpse,” because he or she could transmit impurity to nearby objects like a corpse.
- The laws about leprosy (Leviticus 13) were concern with preventing the spread of uncleanness or impurity.

**Matthew 8:2-4**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals a Leper

- Scripture suggested leprosy was caused by God as a retribution for sin:
  - For example, in Numbers 12:1, 9-10, God makes Miriam leprous for speaking against his servant Moses.
- Scripture also implied that only God could heal leprosy:
  - When the king of Syria asks the king of Israel to cure his army commander Naaman of leprosy, the king of Israel responds **“Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?”** (2 Kings 5:7 NRSV).

**Matthew 8:2-4**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals a Leper

- So in curing the leper, Jesus was:
  - doing something only God can do.
  - by implication forgiving the sin that was the reason for the leprosy in the first place.

**Matthew 8:2-4**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant

- A Centurion appeals to Jesus to heal his servant.
- Jesus offers to go the Centurion's house, but the centurion declines and expresses his confidence that Jesus could heal from afar by his word, just as he as a centurion could command his soldiers to do something and expect it would be done.

**Matthew 8:5-13**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant

- Jesus is astonished at the centurion's confidence and faith in his power, and says:

**“Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

(Matthew 8:10-12 NRSV)

**Matthew 8:5-13**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant

- In Jewish tradition of the day, when God finally reigned in Jerusalem:
  - Gentiles might be brought from the east and west as captives, or
  - Would travel from east and west to bow and pay homage to the God of Israel.
- Jesus however suggests that Gentiles would sit at the heavenly banquet table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- The great faith of the centurion reveals a means by which Gentiles could become part of the people of God.

**Matthew 8:5-13**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-law

- Peter's mother-in-law is in bed with fever.
- Fever was not considered a symptom or sign of disease, as we think of it today.
- Fever was its own peculiar condition:
  - A “heavenly fire” sent by God as punishment for sin
  - A demonic fire, caused by the presence of a demon.

**Matthew 8:14-15**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-law

- Jesus again does something only God can do: extinguish a “supernatural” fire.

**Matthew 8:14-15**

# Jesus the Healer

## The Fulfillment Clause

- Matthew 8:16-17: That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” (NRSV)

**Matthew 8:16-17**

# Jesus the Healer

## The Fulfillment Clause

- Matthew was referring to Isaiah 53:4:
  - “...he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases...” (NRSV)
  - “He bears our sins, and is pained for us... (LXX)
- Matthew thus identifies Jesus as Isaiah’s **Suffering Servant** who takes upon himself the sins of the people – giving a unique perspective on the motive for Jesus’ miracles (= acts of power).
  - The miracles are thus a part of **Jesus’ passion**.

**Matthew 8:16-17**

# Jesus the Healer

## *Middle Unit. Would-be Disciples*

- Two would-be disciples come to Jesus.
  - One apparently thinks of Jesus as a teacher who is “going places” and wants on the bandwagon.
  - Jesus warns: **“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”** (Matthew 8:20 NRSV)

**Matthew 8:18-22**

# Jesus the Healer

## Would-be Disciples

- Two would-be disciples come to Jesus.
  - Second asks if he could first bury his father.
  - Jesus' answer is shocking and callous: **“Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”** Matthew 8:22 (NRSV)
  - Discipleship is not one other commitment we add to others; it is *the* commitment, trumping even love of father and mother.
  - “...there are no excused absences from the kingdom of God whether they be business commitments, social obligations, or sacred family duties.” (Garland p. 99)

**Matthew 8:18-22**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Stills the Storm

- In the Ancient Near East, a storm on the sea was felt to display the power of chaos and evil.
- In Scripture, the sea obeys only the God who created it.
  - For example, Psalm 65:7: **“You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,”** (NRSV)
- In the stilling of the storm, we again see Jesus’ power to do something only God can do.

**Matthew 8:23-27**

# Jesus the Healer

## Healing of the Gadarene Demoniacs

- Two men “possessed by demons” (= demoniacs) confront Jesus.
- In Jewish tradition, demons were free to operate until the day of consummation, so they ask Jesus why he has come “to torment them before the time?”
- With a single command from Jesus, “Go!”, the demons leave the men for a herd of swine.

**Matthew 8:23-27**

# Jesus the Healer

## Healing of the Gadarene Demonics

- Afterwards, the townspeople (presumably Gentiles) reject Jesus.

**Matthew 8:23-27**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals a Paralytic

- Jesus tells a paralytic, “Take heart son, your sins are forgiven.”
  - “Take heart:” associated with God’s deliverance in Scriptures.
  - Only God can forgive sins.
- Hence Jewish scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy.
- To prove to them that he had the power to forgive sins, Jesus cures the paralysis that the Scribes believed was a retribution for the man’s sin.

**Matthew 9:2-8**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Calls Matthew

- Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, who were suspected to be dishonest and were thought of as Roman collaborators by most Jews.
- The Pharisees object and ask Jesus' disciples "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (NRSV)
- Jesus does not deny he was eating with sinners, but explains: **"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."** (Matthew 9:12 NRSV)

**Matthew 9:9-13**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Calls Matthew

- Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6: “**I desire mercy and not sacrifice,**” and suggests the Pharisees learn what this means.
- The Pharisees believed holiness required separation and insulation from those things that defile.
- Jesus however suggests true holiness involves an inclusive mercy in which one becomes as indiscriminate in one’s love and acceptance as God.
- Jesus rejects the idea that uncleanness and impurity are “contagious,” and instead suggests that it is holiness that is contagious, and that holiness will overpower uncleanness.

**Matthew 9:9-13**

# Jesus the Healer

## Question About Fasting

- The disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus and ask why Jesus' disciples do not fast?
- Fasting in the ancient world was done to ward off demons, for demons could gain power over you through eating
- Fasting was a characteristic of Jews, who fasted:
  - As a sign of mourning
  - As a sign of penance to God to stave off disaster
  - To obtain forgiveness of sins from God

**Matthew 9:14-17**

# Jesus the Healer

## Question About Fasting

- Since Jesus was the “bridegroom,” and was with them, and freely forgave sins, cast out demons, and healed disease, there was no need for Jesus disciples to fast.
- Jesus’ ministry was something novel and unique. Jesus explains the new and the old are incompatible with two images:
  - Patching an old garment with a new piece of cloth causes the patched hole to get worse (the patch of new cloth will shrink)
  - New wine in an old wineskin will burst the old wineskin (the new wine ferments and expands too much)

**Matthew 9:14-17**

# Jesus the Healer

## *Last Unit.* **A Girl Restored to Life, A Women Healed**

- The leader of the synagogue (Jairus) kneels before Jesus. His daughter has died, but he has faith that if Jesus lays his hand upon her, she will live.
- On the way to Jairus' house, a women with hemorrhages for 12 years (and thus considered impure / unclean for 12 years) believes that touching Jesus' cloak will heal her.
- Jesus rewards her faith and heals her.

**Matthew 9:18-26**

# Jesus the Healer

## A Girl Restored to Life, A Women Healed

- People at the house laugh when Jesus tells them the girl is only sleeping.
- Jesus takes the girl by his hand, and she is raised to life again.

**Matthew 9:18-26**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

- Two blind men follow Jesus and cry out for mercy.
- The blind men are the first people in the gospel to call Jesus, the Son of David.
  - There was a tradition that the Son of David would be a healer.
- They affirm their faith and confidence that Jesus could heal them, and Jesus says “**According to your faith let it be done to you.**” (Matthew 9:29 NRSV)

**Matthew 9:27-31**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

- For the second time, Jesus asks those he has healed to tell no one.
  - The first time was after the initial miracle of the healing of leper, 8:2-4
- In the stories in the ancient world, the gods usually required that their miracles be recorded and honored as a partial repayment. But not Jesus.

**Matthew 9:27-31**

# Jesus the Healer

## Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute

- In the last of the ten miracles or mighty works, Jesus drives out the “demon” causing a man to be mute.
- The crowds are amazed at Jesus’ power.
- The Pharisees do not deny the miracle, but claim Jesus’ power come from the “ruler of the demons.”

**Matthew 9:32-34**

# Jesus the Healer

## Summary

- Exodus 4:11: Then the LORD said to him [Moses], “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (NRSV)
- Isaiah 35:4-6: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. ... He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.” (NRSV)

**Matthew 8:2—9:35**

# Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse

**Matthew 9:36—10:42**

# The Mission Discourse

## Introduction

- After hearing of Jesus' power as a mighty healer, we move now to instructions given by Jesus for those who share his mission – the “Mission Discourse,” Matthew 9:36—10:42

**Matthew 9:36—10:42**

# The Mission Discourse

## Setting

- The setting for the Mission Discourse:
  - 9:35-38: Jesus' comparison of the crowds to:
    - Sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless
    - A plentiful harvest with few laborers
  - 10:1-4: Choosing of the 12 disciples
- *Sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless.* There are many references in the Hebrew Scriptures to the nation of Israel as a flock:
  - Numbers 27:17: “... **that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd.**” (NRSV)
  - 1 Kings 22:17 (also 2 Chronicles 18:16): “**I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd ...**” (NRSV)
  - *Also:* Jeremiah 50:6, Ezekiel 34:5, Zechariah 11:15, 2 Samuel 24:17.

**Matthew 9:36—10:4**

# The Mission Discourse

## Setting

- 12 disciples
  - Evokes the 12 tribes of Israel.
    - Jews in Jesus' day knew their tribal ancestry, although the tribal structure no longer had political meaning.
    - The Jews in Jesus' day expected that in a “restored” Israel, the structure of 12 tribes would again be meaningful.
  - Jesus' choosing 12 disciples symbolized the goal of Jesus' mission to restore Israel.
    - Later in Matthew 19:28, Jesus will tell his disciples: **“Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** (NRSV)

**Matthew 9:36—10:4**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 1

- The first part (10:5-15) of the **Missionary Discourse** consists of instructions to the disciples:
  - The nature of their mission (10:5-7)
  - The task of healing (10:8)
  - The need to travel light (10:9-10)
  - Dealing with acceptance and rejection (10:11-15)

**Matthew 10:5-15**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 1

- *Common theme:* the disciples represent Jesus, and are to say what Jesus said, do what Jesus did.
- *The nature of the mission:* **“Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”** (10:5-6 NRSV). In Matthew:
  - The mission to the Gentiles is later, beginning only after the Resurrection (see 28:19)
  - The mission to the Jews is first:
    - The mission to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” will continue until the Son of Man comes (10:23).

**Matthew 10:5-15**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 1

- *The Task of Healing:* they are to heal as Jesus healed.
- *Travel Light, Accept No Money:*
  - Testimony to the overwhelming priority of spreading the good news.
  - Illustrates they are totally reliant on God to provide. “They are to go out as the poor to those who are also poor and hungry.” (Garland p. 113)

**Matthew 10:5-15**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 1

- *Dealing with Acceptance and Rejection:*
  - If rejected, do not react violently, but:
    - write them off = “**shake off the dust from your feet**” (10:14 NRSV ) and
    - simply leave their fate (like Sodom and Gomorrah) to the justice of God.

**Matthew 10:5-15**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 1

- Traveling missionaries were the primary way religious and philosophical ideas were spread in the ancient Mediterranean world:
  - Cynics were especially known for their street corner oratory and ascetic lifestyle.
- Early Christians would use instructions such as the ones given by Jesus to try to distinguish between true missionaries of the Jesus movement versus frauds.
  - Do they say and do what Jesus said and did?
  - Do they demand money for the gospel?
  - Do they travel light?
  - Do they deal with rejection as Jesus suggested?

**Matthew 10:5-15**

# The Mission Discourse

## Future Sufferings

- In the second part of the **Mission Discourse** (10:26-42), Jesus warns of two types of suffering that await the twelve on their mission:
  - 1. Persecution by outsiders (10:17-18)
  - 2. Divisions within the family (10:21-22)
- Just as Jesus suffered persecution and division, so too will Jesus' representatives, for: **“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master ...”** (10:24 NRSV)

**Matthew 10:16-25**

# The Mission Discourse

## Future Sufferings

- For the two types of suffering that await the twelve on their mission:

- 1. Persecution by outsiders (10:17-18)
- 2. Divisions within the family (10:21-22)

The disciples are promised two consolations:

- 1. The gift of the Spirit (10:19-20)
- 2. The Coming of the Son of Man (10:23-24)

- For Jews, both these consolations were associated with the End Times (= the Eschaton).

**Matthew 10:16-25**

# The Mission Discourse

## Future Sufferings

- The statement by Jesus in Matthew 10:23 poses many problems: “When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (NRSV)
  - *you:*
    - the 12 disciples?
    - disciples of all generations to come?
  - *Son of Man:*
    - Jesus
  - *the Son of Man comes:*
    - Jesus’ Death and Resurrection?
    - Jesus’ second coming in glory? (= the End Times, the Eschaton)
    - The Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?
    - The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD?
  - *all the towns of Israel:*
    - Towns in the land of Israel?
    - Any towns and cities in the world where Jews live?

Matthew 10:16-25

# The Mission Discourse

## Future Sufferings

- The “obvious” interpretation seems to be:
  - *you*: the 12 disciples
  - *Son of Man*: Jesus
  - *the Son of Man comes*: Jesus’ second coming in glory (= the End Times, the Eschaton)
  - *all the towns of Israel*: Towns in the land of Israel
- If this “obvious” interpretation is correct, then Jesus was in error.
  - If Jesus, fully human and fully God, was in error, what does it imply about Jesus’ consciousness?

**Matthew 10:16-25**

# The Mission Discourse

## Future Sufferings

- Interpretations that avoid concluding Jesus was in error suggest that:
  - *the Son of Man comes*: refers to a past event, such as Jesus' Death and Resurrection, the Gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Or they accept that “*the Son of Man comes*” refers to the Jesus' Second Coming in glory, but argue for some combination of the following meanings:

- *you*: refers to disciples of all generations to come.
- *gone through*: means *fulfilled* the mission.
- *all the towns of Israel*: refers to all towns and cities in the world where Jews live or will live.

**Matthew 10:16-25**

# The Mission Discourse

## Instructions, Part 2

- The third and final part of the **Mission Discourse** (10:26-42) is a somewhat disparate set of sayings. A summary of their content:
  - **10:26-31:** Do not fear (10:26, 28, 31)
  - **10:32-39:** Expect division within families (as Jesus had just warned would be one of the two types of suffering faced by his disciples), and do not value family ties (10:37) above following Jesus.
  - **10:40-42:** **“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”** (10:40 NRSV)
    - Harrington: “... gives rise to viewing Christian life as a ‘chain’ of mission: As the Father sends the Son, so the Son sends the disciples.” (p. 154)

*Next Session:*  
**Rejection and  
Confession:**

**Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—  
12:45).**

**The Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed  
(12:46—13:58)**