

Matthew 17:22-23

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-17/matthew-1722-23/>

Jesus tells His disciples that He will be handed over, killed, and raised from the dead as He and His disciples gather together in Galilee. His comment deeply troubles the disciples.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 9:30-32 and Luke 9:43-45.

Jesus returned to *Galilee* after He was revealed to be the Messiah and *Son of God* to His disciples in Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-28), was transfigured on the high mountain (Matthew 17:1-13), and cast out the demon from the man's son (Matthew 17:14-21).

Matthew used an interesting expression to report His return. He wrote *they were gathering together*. This expression suggests that *they* who *were gathering* had previously been scattered about and *were* now reassembling *together*. This suggests that while *Jesus* was with Peter, James and John, the others were doing something else, perhaps ministering in the countryside.

The *they* in the phrase *they were gathering together* refers to *Jesus* and His group of followers. We know that Peter, James, and John were with *Jesus* during His transfiguration. But we are not told of the whereabouts of the other nine disciples in the unit of twelve. Nor do we know the larger group of *Jesus's* followers during that event or the ones that immediately followed it. At least some of *them* were present (Mark 9:14).

It is possible that *Jesus* had sent *them* on kingdom errands to preach and proclaim the gospel during some or all of His venture in Caesarea Philippi and told them to gather *together in Galilee* at an appointed time. *Jesus* appears to have done something like this at least twice before, and probably three or more times (Matthew 10:5-42; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6; Luke 10:1-16). The Matthew 10 account seems to have occurred relatively early in His ministry. The Mark 6 and Luke 9 accounts may have been the same because they are mentioned just before the feeding of the five thousand men. But the mission to minister in the countryside described in Luke 10 is definitely a separate event from the previous three. It may have been that the remaining disciples *were gathering together in Galilee* after a mission like the ones described in these passages.

It is also possible that *Jesus* may have given His disciples separate routes by which to return to *Galilee* in order to better mask His whereabouts. Mark reports that *as they* began to enter *Galilee*, *Jesus* did not "want anyone to know about it" (Mark 9:30).

While they were gathering Jesus said to them a troubling statement:

The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.

Jesus had recently plainly told at least some of His disciples that "He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up

on the third day” (Matthew 16:21). At that time Peter rebuked *Jesus* for saying such things. Now *Jesus* was telling them plainly again. Similarly, after *He* was transfigured, *Jesus* mentioned to Peter, James, and John about *the Son of Man*’s resurrection (Matthew 17:9) and of His suffering (Matthew 17:12). But it appears that *they* were unable to understand what *He* was talking about at that time. *They* would not understand until *Jesus* appeared to *them* after He was raised from the dead.

The Son of Man is a reference to the Messiah, who the disciples understood to be *Jesus*. *Jesus* said three specific things would happen to Him.

The first thing was that *He is going to be delivered into the hands of men*. Examining this statement closer we see that *Jesus* was not only foretelling His disciples that *He* would be arrested by *men*, but also that *He* would *be delivered into their hands*. To deliver means to hand over. This deliverance does not explicitly specify betrayal, but it suggests it. *Jesus* would *be delivered into the hands of* the Sadducees and Pharisees and be betrayed by one of His twelve disciples—Judas (Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50).

The second thing *Jesus* foretold would happen to Him was that *He* would *be killed*. The chief priests and elders held an illegal trial of *Jesus* once *He* was their prisoner and condemned Him to death (Matthew 26:57-66). They then *delivered Jesus into the hands of the* Romans who executed Him by means of crucifixion (Matthew 27:11-50). After *Jesus* was dead, His body was buried, sealed and guarded in a tomb (Matthew 27:57-66).

The third thing *Jesus* foretold of Himself was that *He will be raised on the third day*. Even though *He* would *be killed*, *Jesus* would not remain dead. *He* would come back to life! Three days after He was crucified, *Jesus* was raised back to life (Matthew 28:1-10).

Matthew described the disciples’ reaction to what *Jesus* was telling them. *And they were deeply grieved*. The disciples were exceedingly sorrowful and disturbed when *they* heard *Jesus* say this.

In addition to being grieved by what *Jesus* said, the disciples were also “afraid” to ask Him what He meant.

“But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.”
(Mark 9:32)

The disciples’ fear to ask *Jesus* what He meant suggests that not only did *they* not understand Him, *they* did not want to understand Him. *They* did not want the thing *they* were hearing Him say to be true. Instead of seeking clarity *they* wallowed in their grief over it.

To them what *Jesus* said would happen was horrible. To them it would signify defeat and failure. It was incomprehensible to them that God would allow His *Son* as the Messiah to be killed at the hands of His enemies. *They* were hurt and confused by what *Jesus* meant.

Luke reports that the disciples did not understand what *Jesus* meant when He said something similar to them after exorcising the demon from the desperate man's son, because it was concealed from them, so that they were unable to perceive it.

“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.”
(Luke 9:44-45)

Part of the disciples' confusion about what *Jesus* meant by these statements was the result of His meaning being concealed from them at this time. Luke does not name the cause of this concealment, whether it was God, their unbelief, or something else.

The disciples did understand *Jesus*'s meaning of these statements after *He* had risen from the dead.

Biblical Text

17:22-23 And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.