

Matthew 12:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

Analysis

'But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.' Jesus's response to murderous plot is strategic withdrawal—not cowardice but wisdom. He 'knew it' ($\gamma\eta\omega\mu\zeta$ /gnous)—whether through human intelligence or divine omniscience, He discerned the danger. His withdrawal demonstrates that faithfulness doesn't require recklessness. There's appointed time for confrontation and death (John 7:6, 8:20, 13:1), but until then, wisdom dictates preservation. Reformed theology affirms divine sovereignty: God's purposes unfold according to His timing; believers should exercise wisdom in danger while trusting providential protection. The 'great multitudes followed' indicates Jesus retained popular support despite elite opposition. His response to their need: 'he healed them all' ($\acute{\epsilon}\theta\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\nu\sigma\epsilon\nu\alpha\acute{\nu}\tau\acute{\alpha}\zeta$ /etherapeusen autous pantas)—compassionate ministry continuing despite threats. This models Christian response to opposition: don't court needless danger, but don't abandon faithful ministry either. Jesus withdrew from hostile Pharisees but remained accessible to needy crowds.

Historical Context

Jesus frequently withdrew from danger during His ministry: after Herod killed John (Matthew 14:13), after feeding 5000 when crowd wanted to make Him king (John 6:15), when Jews sought to stone Him (John 8:59, 10:39). Each withdrawal served strategic purpose: preserving life until appointed time, avoiding premature political confrontation, continuing ministry elsewhere. The pattern demonstrates

Jesus's full humanity—He experienced genuine danger and responded with prudent wisdom—while maintaining divine purpose. 'Great multitudes' reflects His enormous popularity in Galilee despite Pharisaic opposition. Common people recognized His authority and compassion (Matthew 7:28-29). The comprehensive healing—'them all'—demonstrates Christ's unlimited power and compassion: every diseased person who came was healed, regardless of condition's severity or chronicity. This fulfilled Isaiah 53:4 (quoted in Matthew 8:17): He bore our sicknesses. Early church faced similar dynamics: persecution forced strategic relocation, but ministry continued wherever believers went (Acts 8:1-4).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you balance faithfulness to gospel ministry with wisdom about personal safety when facing opposition?
2. What does Jesus's continued compassionate healing despite murder plot teach about priorities in Christian ministry?
3. When is strategic withdrawal appropriate, versus when does faithfulness require staying despite danger?

Interlinear Text

Ο δὲ Ἰησοῦς γνοὺς ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ
G3588 But when Jesus knew it he withdrew himself from thence and
G1161 G2424 G1097 G402 G1564 G2532

ἡκολούθησαν αὐτοὺς ὥχλοι πολλοί καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν
followed him multitudes great and he healed
G190 G846 G3793 G4183 G2532 G2323

αὐτοὺς πάντας
him all
G846 G3956

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:23 (Parallel theme): But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

Matthew 19:2 (Parallel theme): And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

John 7:1 (References Jesus): After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

John 11:54 (References Jesus): Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

Mark 6:56 (Parallel theme): And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.