

Matthew 12:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

Analysis

'And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.' Following the sabbath controversy with Pharisees (v.1-8), Jesus deliberately went 'into their synagogue'—notably called 'their' (αὐτῶν/autōn), suggesting distance or even hostility. Synagogues were local worship and teaching centers throughout Israel. Jesus regularly taught in synagogues during His ministry (Matthew 4:23, Luke 4:16), but opposition was mounting. By entering 'their' synagogue after the sabbath dispute, Jesus demonstrates courage—He doesn't retreat from confrontation but advances. What follows (v.10-14) escalates conflict: Jesus heals on the sabbath, Pharisees plot to kill Him. Reformed theology sees Jesus's determination to minister despite opposition as model for faithful witness: truth must be proclaimed regardless of cost. Jesus's intentional presence in hostile territory demonstrates that the gospel advances through bold proclamation, not tactical retreat. Churches throughout history have faced this choice: soft-pedal truth to avoid offense, or faithfully proclaim despite opposition.

Historical Context

Synagogues (συναγωγή/synagōgē, 'gathering together') emerged during Babylonian exile when Jews lacked temple access. By Jesus's time, every Jewish community had synagogues for weekly sabbath teaching, prayer, Scripture reading. They were led by elders and scribes, with services including recitation of Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), prayers, prophetic readings, and exposition. Any qualified Jewish man could be invited to teach. Jesus utilized this platform

extensively early in His ministry. But as opposition mounted, synagogues became increasingly hostile. The phrase 'their synagogue' reflects this growing separation between Jesus's movement and institutional Judaism. By the time Matthew wrote (probably 60s-80s AD), synagogue expulsion of Christians was underway (John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2). Early church initially tried to remain within Judaism but was gradually expelled, forming separate assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι/ekklēsiai, 'churches'). This painful separation clarified Christianity's distinct identity.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when faithful gospel ministry provokes opposition from religious institutions or communities?
2. What does Jesus's example of advancing despite hostility teach about boldness versus compromise?
3. When should Christians remain in hostile religious contexts, and when should they separate to form faithful alternative communities?

Interlinear Text

Kαὶ	μεταβὰς	ἐκεῖθεν	ῆλθεν	εἰς	τὴν	συναγωγὴν
And	when he was departed	thence	he went	into	<small>G3588</small>	synagogue
G2532	G3327	G1564	G2064	G1519		G4864

αὐτῶν·

their
G846