

Home Alone

In the New Testament Matthew reports that Jesus says:

Matthew 18:20

20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

As a result of this quotation we find people believing that Jesus magically appears in the midst of a group of believers when they gather together.

This passage cannot mean that! How can it be so? If I am home alone, is Jesus not with me? If I live alone, am I fated to be apart from Jesus except when I can find another believer and we get together? Clearly this cannot be the intended meaning.

So then what is the intended meaning? Does it help if I tell you that “are gathered” might also be translated as “have been gathered” or possibly “having been gathered”.

The word translated as “are” is a verb in the present tense, active voice and third person.

The word translated “gathered” is a participle, perfect tense and passive voice.

From Wikipedia:

The **perfect** is a [verb](#) form found in certain languages. The exact meaning of the term differs depending on which language is being described, but in principle the perfect is used to indicate that an action or circumstance occurred earlier than the present time (or other time under consideration), often focusing attention on the resulting state rather than on the occurrence itself. An example of a perfect construction is given by the English sentence *I have made the dinner*: although this gives information about a prior action (my making the dinner), the focus is likely to be on the present consequences of that action (the fact that the dinner is now ready). The word *perfect* in this sense means "completed" (from Latin *perfectus*, which is the perfect passive [participle](#) of the verb *perficere* "to finish").

So the gathering is complete, having been achieved earlier than the present time but having the present result that we are now together, joined or gathered.

Therefore it is saying that where even just two have been gathered, Jesus accompanies them. The passive voice of ‘gathered’ indicates an outside force which is doing the gathering, not those who find themselves together.