

## The Preaching of the Kingdom: Twelve Disciples Sent to Lost Sheep

### Matthew 10

**Matthew 10** gives us the sending forth of the heralds of the kingdom to announce that the King was present, and to demonstrate through signs that He possessed the power to bring about the long anticipated time of millennial blessing. In Matthew 8-9 we saw that the Lord Himself had the power to bring in the kingdom, but now He sends forth His heralds with delegated authority to announce the presence of the King in their midst. Anyone can do these miracles if they have received delegated authority; e.g. Judas Iscariot in this very chapter. But *only God can give that authority*, and Jesus here demonstrates His deity in that way. This preaching is not to be confused with the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God that goes out today, which is far higher in character. Here in Matt. 10 it is *the gospel of the kingdom* (Matt. 10:7), which is much simpler. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the Jews first (vv.5-6) but later we see it will go out to the whole world (Psa. 96:3; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). Psa. 95 gives us the kingdom gospel going out to the nation of Israel, and Psa. 96 shows us the kingdom gospel going out to the world.

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## The Heart a Disciple must have to be Useful in Service (9:35-38)

**vv.35-38** The chapter division should really be at the end of verse 35, because the last three verses properly form the introduction to chapter 10.

### The Heart of Jesus Manifested in His Actions (vv.35-36)

¶ **35** And Jesus went round all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every bodily weakness. v.35 His Actions. The cities and villages referred to here are those in Galilee. The three things He did were:

1. Teaching (ch. 5 - 7) the principles of the kingdom. It is interesting that He is still teaching in the synagogues. Once we get to ch.12, we will see His rejection complete. Then He begins to teach from the sea side.
2. Preaching (ch. 10) the gospel of the kingdom. The "gospel of the kingdom" is the good news that God was about to set up His kingdom in this world. After ch.12, we find that the setting up of the kingdom is postponed, but in the Tribulation period this "gospel of the kingdom" will go out again (Rev. 6:9).
3. Healing (ch. 8 - 9) every sickness. These miracles showed the power of the kingdom, that He was able to bring in the Millennium.

**36** But when he saw the crowds he was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed, and cast away as sheep not having a shepherd. v.36 His Heart. The leaders had rejected His grace in Matt. 9:34 by attributing His miracles to Satan, but this could not

stop the movement of the Lord's heart for the people. He saw them as they really were: sheep without a shepherd, having no moral guidance. He sees them too as "harassed"... manipulated by the religious leaders who should have been their shepherds.

## His Disciples must have His Heart, and Dependence on Him (vv.37-38)

¶ 37 Then saith he to his disciples, *The harvest is great and the workmen are few*; 38 supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth workmen unto his harvest. vv.37-38 The Lord views the people as a "harvest" of precious souls, as an open door for preaching, teaching, etc. The limiting factor isn't the crop, but the workmen. The disciples were encouraged to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, acknowledging that the harvest of souls is His work, not man's. According to His will, He sends workmen. In ch.10 the Lord manifests to the disciples that He is the Lord of the Harvest. But here His desire is to bring their hearts in tune with His... hearts of compassion for the nation of Israel. He is also emphasizing dependence. We need to remember that service in the kingdom is not out of our own volition... but as commissioned by the "Lord of the harvest".

**Sending of the Seventy vs. Twelve.** This sending out of the twelve apostles is not to be confused with the sending out the seventy disciples in Luke 10:1. The seventy were sent out much later, as a final testimony to Israel, but are not mentioned in Matthew's gospel.

## The Delegation of Authority (10:1-4)

The first step before sending out laborers into the harvest is to call the workmen. The second step is to confer power on them. Thirdly, to give them special instructions for how they were to use that power, and what kind of treatment they should expect to receive.

### The Nature of the Authority (v.1)

#### CHAPTER 10

¶ And having called to *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, so that they should cast them out, and heal every disease and every bodily weakness. v.1 What we see in ch.10 is the Lord sending workmen into His harvest. But before he sends them, He first invests His authority and power in them. Anyone can do these miracles if they

have received delegated authority; e.g. Judas Iscariot, but *only God can give that authority*. Here we have an important principle for service in the kingdom. Christ will not call a disciple to do something without giving the power to accomplish it. This power would be effective in two spheres: (1) the spiritual and (2) the physical. Another important point to note is that the call to service comes from the Lord, not from the need itself. The need was noticed in Matt. 9:37, but the apostles were not sent out until Matt. 10:1!

## The Names of the Twelve Apostles (vv.2-4)

¶ 2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax-gatherer; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, who was surnamed Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas the Iscariote, who also delivered him up. vv.2-4 Next we have the names of the twelve apostles. They were disciples before (v.1), but now they become apostles, or “sent ones”. Mark 3:14 gives us this order explicitly; “and he ordained twelve, that they should be (1) with him [i.e. discipleship], and that (2) he might send them forth to preach [apostleship].” This is a great lesson; we must follow Christ before we can serve Him! We must sit at Jesus’ feet before we go out in service in an official capacity; e.g. Paul, see Gal. 1:22-24. Before Pentecost there were only twelve, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel, who was being called at this time. But after the Church was called, God called a special vessel, a thirteenth apostle with a focus on the Gentiles. Paul became the characteristic minister to the Gentiles, and “Simon called Peter” (heading this list) became the characteristic minister to the house of Israel; see Gal. 2:7. In Mark 6:7 we read that Jesus “sent them forth by *two and two*”. It is wonderful that the Lord gave each disciple a companion in service! The moral pairing of these twelve are given in Luke 6:13-16. By comparing with Luke we see that “Lebbaeus, who was surnamed Thaddaeus” must be Judas the brother of James. See entries for [the three Jameses](#) and [the three Judases](#).

**Bartholomew.** Bartholomew is probably identical with Nathanael (John 1:45; John 21:2) because in the Synoptic Gospels Philip and Bartholomew are mentioned together; in John’s Gospel, it is Philip and Nathanael, and John never otherwise mentions Bartholomew.

**Simon of Cana.** The title “Simon the Canaanite” is misleading. That would make you think we was a Gentile. But it should really be “Simon the Cananaean”, a Jew from Cana of Galilee. He is also called Simon Zealotes.

## The Sphere and Nature of their Work (10:5-8)

¶ **5** These twelve Jesus sent out when he had charged them, saying, Go not off into *the* way of *the* nations, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; **6** but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. vv.5-6 The Sphere. They were not told to go to the “dogs” of the Gentiles, but to the lost “sheep” of Israel. It is important to see that their mission is connected with the nation of Israel... quite different from the Church. The Lord is presenting Himself to Israel as their promised King. God was dealing with Israel as a nation, giving them opportunity to acknowledge His Son. The sheep are “lost”, that is, lost in a spiritual sense... but recovery was still held out as a possibility. Israel was scattered as well as lost, but while Christ was on earth His apostles were never commissioned to go outside the borders of Israel. But after the King is rejected they are given a new commission, which is much broader, encompassing “all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

**7** And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. **8** Heal *the* infirm, *raise the dead*, cleanse lepers, cast out demons: ye have received gratuitously, give gratuitously. vv.7-8 The Nature. Their mission had two parts: (1) preaching the gospel of the kingdom; and (2) works of power to relieve the effects of sin. These miracles that would be done by the twelve were proof that the Messiah was present on earth, and that He had the authority to confer His power on others. “Ye have received gratuitously, give gratuitously” - this is the spirit they were to have in their service. There was never to be an attitude of pride over the power invested in them, and never a spirit of tightfistedness.

## Dependence for Their Needs, Acceptance or Rejection (10:9-15)

**9** Do not provide yourselves with gold, or silver, or brass, for your belts, **10** nor scrip for the way, nor two body coats, nor sandals, nor a staff: for the workman is worthy of his nourishment. vv.9-10 These are things that would tend to encumber the servant of God, and allow them be less dependent on the Lord for their needs. By discarding the normal

provisions of the traveler, they would manifest a their dependence on God in a special outward way to the nation of Israel. God would provide the necessary “nourishment” for His “workmen”. Now, we must remember that this was a strictly Jewish mission... we do not apply all these things literally today in the full light of Christianity. However, the principles are valid. A servant that goes out with the right spirit will have the conscious sense that they have been sent by Lord, and are here only as His instrument.

**11** But into whatsoever city or village ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there remain till ye go forth. **12** And as ye enter into a house salute it. **13** And if the house indeed be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. **14** And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. **15** Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in judgment-day than for that city. vv.11-15

Now He comes to the subject of lodging. They were to stay with those who were “worthy” and shun those who were “not worthy”. What marked a household as worthy? If they received the servant then they were as much as receiving the master (see Matt. 25:40). They would “salute” or show a sign of respect to those worthy homes. They were to “shake off the dust” or show a sign of warning to those who refused them. Those who rejected these messengers were more responsible than the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because they had been given more light! Clearly this is not speaking about the preachers of the gospel of God’s grace today. We seek the unworthy, not the worthy. We preach to those who are dead in sins, trusting that God will quicken the soul by the power of His word. We warn the ungodly, but we are never to invoke the judgment of God against them. But here, by contrast, God will bring the glad tidings of the Kingdom to those who are already longing for the Messiah.

## **Things for the Preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom to Remember (10:16-42)**

In this section the Lord brings before the apostles things they should remember while out in the Lord’s work. As we read down through these verses, it will become clear that these circumstances go far beyond what the twelve faced in their Galilean ministry. Clearly its primary interpretation is to the remnant of the Jews in the Tribulation primarily, and partially to the twelve apostles in our Lord’s time and after Pentecost. Yet we certainly can make application to disciples in the Kingdom today:

1. How to Act in the face of Political & Religious Persecution (vv.16-20)
2. There will be Hatred Against the Bearers of Christ's Name (vv.21-22)
3. The Master was Rejected (vv.23-26a)
4. In a Coming Day Everything would be Made Clear (vv.26b-27)
5. To Live in the Fear of God (v.28)
6. They were Precious to their Father (vv.29-31)
7. There is a Coming Day of Reward for the Lord's Servants (vv.32-33)
8. The Claims of Christ Dominate every other Claim (vv.34-39)
9. There will be Rewards for those who show Hospitality (vv.40-42)

## Remember: How to Act in the face of Political & Religious Persecution (vv.16-20)

¶ **16** Behold, "I" send you as sheep in the midst of wolves; be therefore prudent as the serpents, and guileless as the doves. v.16 "*Sheep in the midst of wolves*" speaks of the danger these messengers would be in. The Lord would not have them go forth with false impressions about what they would face. The wolves might be the religious leaders who would hunt them down. "*Prudent as serpents*" speaks of the wisdom that would be needed to navigate the difficulties. However, the crookedness and malevolence of the serpent was not to be found in them. That would ruin their testimony. Instead, they were to be honest and straightforward ("*guileless as doves*") in their thoughts and dealings.

**17** But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to sanhedrims, and scourge you in their synagogues; **18** and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations. vv.17-18 While they were not to worry about food, water, or shelter, the greatest danger to them was fellow human beings. Here were have the twofold danger that would face them:

1. Religious persecution - delivered to the Sanhedrims, scourged in the synagogues, which are the very places the Word of God was to be taught.
2. Political persecution - brought before Gentile powers (usually by the Jews). "*For my sake*" is a blessed reminder that the persecuted servant suffers for the name of Christ.

**19** But when they deliver you up, be not careful how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that hour what ye shall speak. **20** For "ye" are not the speakers, but the

Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. vv.19-20 Clearly this is not speaking about Christian ministry. The Christian minister ought to be led by the Spirit of God (we can apply it that way), but he is not to stand up and just “wing it”. However, these messengers of the Kingdom will be making a special show of dependence. Also, this has to do with a defense or trial in court, not an assembly meeting. The “*Spirit of their Father*” (a more ambiguous expression than “Spirit of God” or “another Comforter”) would speak “*in them*” not in the sense of indwelling (John 7:39) by as in the Old Testament when the power of Spirit spoke and worked through men.

## **Remember: There will be Hatred Against the Bearers of Christ’s Name (vv.21-22)**

¶ **21** But brother shall deliver up brother to death, and father child; and children shall rise up against parents and shall put them to death; v.21 They were warned of betrayal by friends, family, etc. Although the principle began at this time, the danger will rise to its full height in the tribulation, when: “Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom, etc.” (Mic. 7:5-6). The hatred would come from even the closest quarters, from the ones that are loved most and best.

**22** and ye shall be hated of all on account of my name. But he that has endured to *the* end, “he” shall be saved. v.22 Not only from the nearest family members, but hatred would come from even the common people on the street. Those who “*endure*” the persecution to “the end” of the Great Tribulation will be “saved” from death, because the Son of Man will come (v.23) in power and great glory, and the remnant will be delivered. See also Matt. 24:13-14.

## **Remember: The Master was Rejected (vv.23-26a)**

¶ **23** But when they persecute you in this city, flee to the other; for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have completed the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come. v.23 The disciples were not to court danger in a foolhardy manner; but rather keep moving. The persecution would actually aid in the spread of the kingdom gospel; spurring them on from one city to the next. The coming of the Son of Man (the appearing) was what this remnant was to labor toward. Clearly this passage cannot be limited to the twelve apostles in the first century! The Church exists in a parenthesis. The twelve apostles are representative of the faithful remnant of Jews, and their mission in this chapter was interrupted at the cross, terminated at the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) and will be resumed after the rapture. The whole Church period is passed over in silence. “Son of man” is the Lord’s title in both suffering



and coming glory (Heb. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:27), and if the apostles were to herald the coming kingdom, they must also expect rejection (v.24).

**24** The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his lord. **25** *It is sufficient for the disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?* **26a** Fear them not therefore; vv.24-26a The Lord was proving the rejection of Israel, and soon the apostles would feel it as well. As disciples, we are in a position of inferiority to our Master, and ought not to expect better treatment than He received. In fact, it is fitting that we feel the same rejection He felt... although sad to say the world is often more comfortable with Christians than they were with Christ. Beelzebub means “lord of the flies”. According to Jewish tradition, Beelzebub was the “prince of the demons” (Matt. 9:34).

## **Remember: In a Coming Day Everything Would be Made Clear (vv.26b-27)**

**26b** for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, and secret which shall not be known. v.26b In the path of service, the motives of those who do not believe the gospel are unclear. The servant of God does not need to know everything in order to serve. But in a coming day, all those hidden motives will be made plain, for God by Jesus Christ will judge the secrets of men (Rom. 2:16).

**27** What I say to you in darkness speak in the light, and what ye hear in the ear preach upon the houses. v.27 In the meantime however, the servant of Christ should be occupied with what is true, and what is clear. They were to be open and bold in speaking the things they did know, the things they had learned “in the ear” at the feet of Jesus.

## **Remember: To Live in the Fear of God (v.28)**

¶ **28** And be not afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; but fear rather him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. v.28 The persecution against these messengers of the gospel of the kingdom would be very intense. It would be easy to be influenced by the fear of man, because of the threat to life and limb. But in the grand scheme, what harm can men really do? They can kill the body, but God can kill both body and soul in hell. The Lord is not threatening His servants, but showing them that their persecutors would have to face One who had far more power than they did. The only thing

the disciples really needed to be afraid of was of displeasing God.

## **Remember: They were Precious to their Father (vv.29-31)**

**29** Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father; **30** but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered. **31** Fear not therefore; “ye” are better than many sparrows. vv.29-31 The Father’s love for His children and the value He places on them is an encouragement. A sparrow has very little value in the sight of men. Two sparrows for one farthing was a price the poorest could afford. But even the most worthless of birds is cared for by the Father (Matt. 6:26). “Better than many sparrows” - of all God’s creatures, the human life is of the greatest value to God. The Father’s care for His children is also meticulous. He cares for “every hair of your head”! The smallest detail of our lives is important and noticed by Him.

## **Remember: There is a Coming Day of Reward for the Lord’s Servants (vv.32-33)**

**32** Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, “I” also will confess him before my Father who is in *the* heavens. **33** But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will “I” also deny before my Father who is in *the* heavens. vv.32-33 The day for confessing Christ is now. But the day for Christ’s confession of His servants is future, in heaven at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). If someone denies Christ in the sense of being their Lord and Savior, then they will be denied salvation in the day of judgment. However, there will be “loss” at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15) even for believers if they deny Christ in their walk and ways. Notwithstanding, their eternal security is not in danger, for “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” We have a similar expression in 2 Tim. 2:12-13.

## **Remember: The Claims of Christ Dominate every other Claim (vv.34-39)**

¶ **34** Do not think that I have come to send peace upon the earth: I have not come to send peace, but a sword. v.34 The Lord’s first coming created a disruption, or a division, just as a sword cuts something in two. There were those whose hearts had been touched, and they responded in faith. There were those who had merely outward, religious piety, but manifested their evil hearts in opposition to Christ and His servants. Does this contradict

other scriptures that speak about Christ bringing peace to the earth; e.g. Luke 1:79; 2:14; and Acts 10:36? No. Christ came with the gospel of peace, but that message was rejected. The context of this chapter is the sending forth of the apostles in the midst of an apostate nation. One day, the sword will fall on the apostate nation of a later day, and “the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa. 32:17). But truth is exclusive... we must understand that. Christ did not come to make a false peace at the expense of righteousness.

**35** For I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter with her mother, and the daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law; **36** and they of his household *shall be* a man’s enemies. vv.35-36 The testimony of the apostles would have a striking impact on the communities they reached. Families would be thrown into confusion. The closest earthly relationships, those who were naturally on the same page would suddenly be at odds when some received Christ. Does this contradict the principle given in 1 Cor. 14:33; “for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace”? No. It is not that God desires division or confusion, but rather it is the natural result of the truth entering family circles where some of their members reject Him. See Micah 7:5-6.

**37** He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me. **38** And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. **39** He that finds his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it. vv.37-39 The path for faith is not an easy one in a Christ-rejecting world. Sin has made this world a wilderness, with thorns and briars in abundance. Three areas are addressed:

- Give Christ the Preeminence in our Affections (v.37) - It isn’t that the Lord would have His servants be “without natural affection” (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3), but that the claims of Christ must have the first place over every other claim.
- Be Willing to Suffer Shame and Rejection (v.38) - A cross in scripture always speaks of shame. Before a criminal was crucified, they were forced to undergo a walk of shame, carrying their cross (John 19:17). A man carrying a cross was a man who had already been sentenced. Likewise, the servant of Christ must be determined to suffer shame and be rejected by this world without any thought of escaping it.
- Abandon all our Personal Ambitions (v.39) - To live in pursuance of one’s own ambitions is the *modus operandi* of this world. To find one’s life is to live entirely for self, at the expense of the claims of Christ. Here Jesus teaches that such a life is really lost, according to God’s estimation. But on the other hand, when a person abandons every personal and professional ambition in devotion to Christ (“for my

sake”), the world calls that a “lost life”. But in reality, it is only that person who “truly lives” according to God’s purpose. You get the same principle in John 12:24. If the corn of wheat had been “saved” there would have been no continuation of life and fruit-bearing. But in Jesus accepting suffering and death, the result has been life!

## **Remember: There will be Rewards for those who show Hospitality (vv.40-42)**

**40** He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me. v.40 The principle of delegated authority means that the sent ones come with the authority of the Sender. But it also means that the Sender will reward those who receive His messengers as if it were Himself! This is the positive side. There would be those who would receive these messengers, and such would be rewarded.

**41** He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward. **42** And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. vv.41-42 He gives three examples of this principle of reward. The point in all three examples is that our response to the messengers of Christ in the time of rejection will manifest our true state of soul.

- Receiving a prophet (v.41a) - the nation might look with shame upon an Israelite receiving a servant of God with a message for the time. But in receiving the prophet, that hospitable person would join themselves in fellowship with that ministry, and so earn “a prophet’s reward”.
- Receiving a righteous man (v.41b) - again, the servants of God would be slandered, and called unrighteous by the leaders of apostate Israel. If one hospitable person welcomed a servant of God into their home with a welcome worthy of a righteous man, they would share his reward.
- Refreshing a disciple (v.42) - now we are shown that God takes note of the smallest deed. A simple cup of water, or service of refreshment, to a disciple in the time of Christ’s rejection, will secure for heaven a disciple’s reward.

Note: An important thing to see is that the expression “in the name of” does not have a religious connotation. In scripture, a “name” refers to a person in their revealed character. For example, we must believe in “the Name of the only-begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

We must believe on Christ in His identity as the eternal and only Son of God. In a similar way, “to receive a prophet in the name of a prophet” is to receive him as a true prophet of God, etc. These verses are not instructing us to think of a prominent disciple or prophet and do our deeds in that person’s name, which has been the practice in Christendom.

## **Conclusion of Commission, Continuation of Ministry (11:1)**

### **CHAPTER 11**

¶ And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. v.1 Now that the commission of the twelve was complete, the Lord turns to “their cities”, or the cities of Galilee. Aside from his yearly visits to Jerusalem (given in John’s gospel) Jesus did not bring His ministry to Judea until the end of His path. Instead He remained to the north of the land, laboring with the poor folks of Galilee. Yet we will find in ch.11-12 that His ministry is utterly rejected by all.