

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
 (Lesson SB-MT10)
 Matthew 10

The Twelve Disciples (10:1 – 4)

This is the first time that Matthew mentions the Twelve. In verse 1, they are noted to have been the Twelve disciples. However, in verse 12, they are the Twelve *apostles*. The word *apostles* is the Greek word a*postolo" and means one sent. In this passage and others, the emphasis is upon the authority granted to the one being sent (e.g. see 1 Thess 2:6 as an example of the authority possessed by the apostles to the Church). For instance, Paul uses the word in this more narrow sense in 1 Corinthians 9:1-5; 15:7; and Galatians 1:17, 19 to refer to the Twelve plus himself by special dispensation (1 Cor 15:8-10).

On certain occasions, the word carries the idea of a messenger (John 13:16) or a missionary or representative (Rom 16:7; 2 Cor 8:23). On one occasion, Jesus is referred to as an apostle in Hebrews 3:1. In these latter instances, the emphasis is upon the representative or agency nature in which the one being sent is employed.

It is likely that Jesus chose twelve to serve as an analogy to the twelve tribes of Israel (see *Expositors Bible Commentary*, p. 236). As such they would point to the eschatological renewal of Israel during the Messianic reign of Christ. Eventually, they would become the Twelve apostles to the Church. A comparison of the list of the Twelve is as follows:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:13-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Cananaean	Simon the Cananaean	Judas, brother of James	Judas, brother of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	[vacant]

Some observations regarding this list would include the following points:

- Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot is always last.
- Matthew uses "first" in connection with Peter, but Matthew did not mean that Peter was the first convert. More than likely Andrew or John was the first convert. "First" as used by Matthew most likely means first or more prominent among equals (see *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 237).
- The first four members of each list are two pairs of brothers.
- In each list, there are three groups of four, each group headed by Peter, Philip, and James the son of Alphaeus. But within each group the order varies.
- Mark in Mark 6:7 indicates that the men were sent out two by two. This perhaps accounts for the pairing in Matthew 10:2-4.
- Apparently, Simon the Canaanite is the same as Simon the Zealot.

- Thaddaeus is another name for Judas the brother of James who would later become the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2).
- Simon the Zealot (or Simon the Cananaean) was most likely a nationalist, i.e. a strong upholders of Jewish traditions and religion. Some decades later they became a principal cause of the Jewish War in which Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The name probably reveals Simon's past political and religious associations.

Sending the Twelve (10:5 – 15)

This passage is a good example of how each Gospel writer presents a discourse of Jesus in what is most likely a condensed form in line with the Gospel writer's purpose and in order to highlight topical interests. Even though Matthew has demonstrated a tendency to arrange material in a topical fashion, use only loose chronology, and condense certain events, Matthew did not invent these settings and events. (An example of these stylistic tendencies in Matthew's Gospel would include the raising of Jairus' daughter in 9:18-26 where Matthew collapses the first approach of Jairus and the news from the messengers with the result that his daughter is presented as dead a little earlier than in the other synoptic parallels. Another example would include the healing of the centurion's servant in 8:5-13 where the centurion himself is said to have approached Jesus, yet in Luke, the centurion sent elders to Jesus).

Here in 10:5ff, we see Matthew once again condensing certain events in order to maintain focus upon his purpose, i.e. to authenticate Jesus' claim to be the rightful King of Israel. Luke records a similar commission to the Twelve as well as a group of seventy disciples (Luke 9:1-6 and 10:1-16). The commands to both groups are very similar. Mark and Luke include narrative relating to the Twelve's departure and return (Mark 6:12-13 and Luke 9:6, 10) while Matthew omits it. Most likely, the Twelve were part of the seventy and instructions given to the former were also given to the latter. Therefore, Matthew omits the narrative relating to the commissioning of the seventy since it does not fit his specific purpose related to Jesus as the rightful King presenting His kingdom to Jews.

In verses 5-7, we see Jesus commanding the Twelve to restrict their ministry to the Jews with the gospel of the kingdom. Later in history, Paul as an apostle to the Church understood the place of the Jews in God's plan (e.g. Rom 1:16; 9 – 11). This understanding even affected Paul's strategy in his missionary efforts (Acts 13:46). Paul's strategy was not due to a carry over from the Age of Israel into the Church Age of a primacy of the Jews in God's plan as had existed and as will once again exist in the Millennium. Rather, his strategy of almost always teaching in the synagogue first was the result of two factors: 1) he knew that he would have a ready hearing in the synagogues and 2) he loved his own and desired that they be saved in spite of the fact that they had been temporarily set aside for the duration of the Church Age (Rom 10:1 cf. Rom 9-11).

In verses 8 – 10, Jesus expected the Twelve to be supported by those to whom they ministered; however, they were not to charge others since they had been given everything free of charge. The mission of the Twelve was short-term. In essence, they were to do a national religious survey to determine the people's response to Jesus as Messiah. "Provide" in verse 9 is the Greek word *kthvshsqe* (*ktēsēsthe*) and means to "procure for oneself, acquire, get" (see *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Walter Bauer, p. 455). In other words, they were to maintain focus and not be distracted by acquiring things of the world.

In verses 11 – 15, the "worthy" does not refer to the morally upright, socially acceptable, religious person. Rather, it refers to the one willing and able to receive an apostle of Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom. These people are the opposite of the dogs and pigs of Matthew 7:6. The Twelve were emissaries of Jesus, therefore those who received them in effect received the Messiah. Verse 15 combined with 11:22 and 24 implies that there will be degrees of judgment and torment for those who reject Jesus as the Messiah.

Persecution for the Twelve and Other Disciples (10:16 – 26)

Matthew 10:17-23 goes beyond the immediate mission of the Twelve and envisions greater opposition and world impact than anything the Twelve experienced during Jesus' ministry. Yet this is not a new theme in Matthew. On several occasions, Matthew documents instruction from Jesus that relates to circumstances not encountered by the disciples during Jesus' life. It is a fact that these disciples experienced some of what had been predicted by Jesus after Jesus' death (e.g. severe persecution). However, in retrospect, it is obvious that Jesus was primarily predicting things of an eschatological nature (i.e. things surrounding His Second Coming) even though he also alludes to events surrounding His First Coming. For instance, consider the following:

- Prediction of severe persecution (5:10-12)
- A time of prolonged witness to the world (5:13-14; 7:13-14)
- His being taken away from them (9:15)
- Many Gentiles participating in the Messianic banquet (8:11-12)

These verses have both an immediate application to Jesus' disciples combined with a long-term view or perspective. These Twelve certainly experienced persecution to the point of death in some cases after Jesus' death; however, at this point in Jesus' ministry where the offer of the kingdom is still being presented to Israel, the period of time that Jesus had in view seems to be more in line with Daniel's seventieth week (a.k.a. the Tribulation). Note verse 22b that "he who endures to the end will be saved" and verse 23b which states "you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." The title "Beelzebub" in verse 25 is another title for Satan elsewhere (see 12:24-27; Mark 3:22-26; Luke 11:18-19).

The key to properly interpreting this passage is to realize that the setting is entirely Age of Israel and Jewish in orientation. (Of course, Gentiles are also included, but only as they are brought into the kingdom that Jesus is offering to the Jews through faith in the Gospel that Jesus preaches, i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom). **Also, one must understand that as long as Jesus was still making the offer of the Kingdom to Israel, His teaching contains an implicit assumption of acceptance by Israel, followed by His predicted death (a.k.a. His Passion), followed by Daniel's seventieth week, followed by the 2nd Coming, and finally followed by the Messianic Kingdom.**

There have been no small number of distortions of the interpretation of this passage and others like it by those who have seen the suffering and persecution that the disciples experienced during the early years of the Church Age as a fulfillment of Jesus' predictions in this passage. **The suffering He has predicted for the disciples must be understood in the light of the implicit assumptions that underlay Jesus' teaching at this point in His ministry. Those assumptions do not include the Church at this point even though later in His ministry, Jesus will make certain predictions regarding the Church based upon the ever-increasing reality of Israel's rejection.**

So, by the time that Matthew penned these verses, it is possible that the disciples who were at that point ministering to the Church would have seen some type of relation between Jesus' predictions of persecution and suffering and their current state of affairs. However, if so, it would be due in large degree to the fact that God's revelation (i.e. Scripture) was not yet complete (i.e. the progressive nature of revelation) and the related evolution of understanding by the early Church of what had transpired beginning with Pentecost. Numerous examples exist among the early Church "fathers" (the disciples of the disciples in the 2nd Century and later) of an embryonic and not fully developed systematic theology, yet when one considers their circumstances (e.g. persecution, the sparse existence of the completed Canon for study and analysis in the first few centuries A.D., etc.), one must still marvel at their faith in many cases.

Universal principle from this pericope: Sometimes God uses persecution and suffering with His own to bring the gospel message to others.

Jesus Teaches the Fear of God (10:27-31)

Jesus uses what is known as *a fortiori* (i.e. from the greater to the lesser) logic to explain to the disciples the reason they should not be afraid. If God knows when a sparrow falls and if God knows the number of hairs on a person's head, He certainly values the lives and eternal destiny of His Own.

Confess Christ Before Men (10:32 – 33)

This passage has a strong parallel to teaching by Paul to the Church in Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:12 – 13. However, note that in the latter passage (2 Tim 2:12-13), one's eternal destiny is not the issue (i.e. "He cannot deny Himself" in 2 Tim 2:13) as apparently is the case in Matthew 10:32-33. The difference between Matthew and 2 Timothy is the audience and the nature of the exhortation. In **2 Timothy**, the audience is the Church Age **believer**. In **Matthew 10:32-33**, the audience is the Jewish (or even Gentile) **unbeliever** who rejects Jesus as the promised Messiah and the gospel of the kingdom that was being preached by Jesus and His disciples.

Christ Brings Division (10:34 – 39)

Jesus did not come to bring peace prior to His Second Advent and the ushering in of the Millennium. He will be divisive. This principle is true of any period (Age of Israel, Church or Tribulation); however, it will perhaps be most evident in that period of the maximum intensification of evil that characterizes the Tribulation. Jesus quotes from Micah 7:6 in verse 35. Micah was describing the sinfulness and rebellion of Judah in the days of King Ahaz (730 – 720 B.C.). [Remember Matthew 2:6 quoted Micah 5:2 to refer to the city of Jesus' birth, i.e. Bethlehem].

Taking one's cross refers to a commitment to the extent of being willing to die for something. Of course, in most cases where believers take up their cross, physical death is not the result. Rather, the death that occurs is death to self and the world. This is true regardless of the dispensation.

A Cup of Cold Water (10:40 – 42)

Here Jesus teaches the principle of rewards in the eternal kingdom for the person who treats the one sent with the gospel of the kingdom with kindness. Even the 8th Century B.C. prophet Daniel recognized the reward principle in Daniel 12:3. Rewards in eternity are commensurate with one's faithfulness to the principles applicable to the dispensation in which one lives.