

The Church of the Servant King

Thursday Night Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew

(Thurs_Matt10)

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES (10:1 – 4)

1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. 2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. (Matt 10:1-4)

This is the first time that the “Twelve” are mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel narrative. 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 *αποστολος* 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 Thessalonians 2:6 as an example of the authority possessed by the Apostles).

6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. (1 Thess 2:6)

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).

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 My defense to those who examine me is this: 4 Do we not have a right to eat and drink? 5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? (1 Cor 9:1-5)

Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (1 Cor 15:7)

Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. (Gal 1:17)

But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother. (Gal 1:19)

And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (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.

Jesus chose twelve to serve as an analogy to the twelve tribes of Israel.¹ As such they pointed to the eschatological renewal of Israel during the Messianic reign of Christ. 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
<i>Simon Peter</i>	<i>Simon Peter</i>	<i>Simon Peter</i>	<i>Simon Peter</i>
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>
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 but filled by Matthias Acts 1:26]

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*.²
- 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 – 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)

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, *Expositor's Bible Commentary, New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972-1992), electronic edition.

² Ibid.

of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. 9 "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. 11 "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. 12 "As you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13 "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. 14 "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 "Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

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 (Lu 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 (Mk 6:12-13 and Lu 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 approach of preaching first in the synagogue was not due to a carry over from the Age of Israel into the present dispensation or 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 intercalated Church Age Body of Christ dispensation (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” (KJV) or “acquire” (NASV) in verse 9 is the Greek word κτήσηθε (*ktēsēsthe*) and means to “procure for oneself, acquire, get.”³ In other words, they were to maintain focus and not be distracted by acquiring things of the world.

In verses 11-15, the “worthy” is not a reference to how a 1st Century A.D. religious Jewish person would define a 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 (“*do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces*”).

The Twelve were emissaries of Jesus, therefore those who received them in effect received the Messiah. Verse 15 (“...it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city”) combined with 11:22 and 24 implies that there will be degrees of judgment and torment for those who reject Jesus as the Messiah.

Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. (Matt 11:22)

Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you. (Matt 11:24)

PERSECUTION FOR THE TWELVE AND OTHER DISCIPLES (10:16 – 26)

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; 18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19 "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. 20 "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 22 "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. 23 "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. 24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. 25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household! 26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

Matthew 10:17-23 goes beyond the immediate mission of the Twelve and envisions greater opposition and world impact than anything the Twelve actually 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:

³ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd edition from Walter Bauer's fifth edition (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979), 455.

- 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 gospel 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 preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to Israel, His teaching anticipates certain Jewish-centric prophecies coming to fruition – 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.

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)

27 "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Jesus uses a logic similar to that used by the Apostle Paul on occasion – a logic 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)

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

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.

And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:17)

It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;
12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;
13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:11-13)

CHRIST BRINGS DIVISION (10:34 – 39)

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; 36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. 37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

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)

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

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 6th Century B.C.

prophet Daniel recognized the reward principle in Daniel 12:3 (*“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”*). Rewards in eternity are commensurate with one’s faithfulness to the principles applicable to the dispensation in which one lives.