

Matthew 10 • Instructions for Service

Introduction

This chapter of Matthew's Gospel presents a significant milestone of change in Christ's earthly ministry. In chapters 1-4 Matthew reveals His Person, in chapters 5-7 His Gospel and teaching, and in chapters 8-9 His authenticating power and miracles. In other words, the authenticity of Jesus as Messiah is confirmed by the fulfillment of God's Word, the message that He preaches, and the supporting miracles. Now Jesus designates and sends messengers and sends messengers to carry the message and continue the ministry in His character. It is important to note the changes in the following chapter because the Apostles of Jesus' day did not experience nor fulfill every single instruction provided. This is because some instructions were given to those original messengers, some to today's messengers, and some yet to be fulfilled in the future.

¹Jesus 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.

²Now 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; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: Just previous to this calling of the Twelve, what had Christ asked them to do?

A: He had asked them to pray for workers for the harvest.

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

— Matthew 9:36–38

Application: We are not only called to pray **about** the harvest but called **into** the harvest to serve.

Q: What is the chief difference between v.1 and v.2? What has changed?

A: In v.1 they are called "disciples" (those who learn) but in v.2 become designated as "apostles" (those who are sent).

Application: At some point we will have to personally put our faith into practice.

Q: Why did Jesus equip these particular apostles with the kind of spiritual authority outlined in v.1?

A: Christ always equips His servants for the particular mission field in which they operate. In this particular instance their priority is to bring the Gospel to the nation of Israel, and as such Paul explains, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom". (1 Co. 1:22) This kind of spiritual authority was required for the people they were called to.

Q: What is probably the most important, practical application we can glean from this list of Apostles?

A: They represent a wide variety of people from very different backgrounds, some of whom in normal life would actually be characterized as "opposites".

Application: An authentic calling in the Lord is characterized first by a period of preparation and discipleship, and then equipping those He has prepared for service. As in the example of the varied backgrounds of the Apostles, God uses a variety of people to accomplish His work.

⁵These 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; ⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

⁷“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. ⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

[Read v.5-10]

Q: To whom is this commission given? Is it for everybody?

A: This the original commission given to what we call “The Foundational Apostles” in recognition that no one has since been given the kind of authority Christ gave to them. The original calling was to the Jews only but Jesus would personally change that for them (and us) at His Ascension.

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

— Acts 1:8

Observation: In Scripture there are four kind of apostles: Christ who is **THE** Apostle to which all apostles are subordinate (Heb.3:1), the original Twelve such as Peter and John whose involvement went back to the ministry of John the Baptist (Acts 1:21-22), those such as Paul and James who had direct contact with Christ (1 Co. 9:1), and those throughout all the centuries since who are best characterized as “church planters” (Eph. 4:11) rather than in the character and authority of the previous types.

Q: What was the first proof of the power and authority of their calling?

A: They performed miracles in the same manner as Christ did to confirm the greater importance of the Gospel message.

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

— Hebrews 2:3a-4

Q: What was the second proof?

A: They were not to personally profit from the ministry but to be genuine providers of the Gospel in the character of Christ. They were not only authenticated by doing the same miracles as Christ, but by conducting themselves in the same manner and behavior.

Q: In v.10, What does “support” actually mean?

A: The Greek word is “*trophe*” which actually means “food, nourishment, sustenance”. What Jesus did **NOT** use was “*misthos*”, which literally means “wages” or “reward” where pay is used. (This is a valuable lesson for discerning true teachers from the false as it is their **needs** which should be met, not their **surplus**.)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

— 1 Timothy 5:8

Application: The original Apostles were initially called to duplicate Christ’s ministry within the very “mission field” in which He was then working.

¹¹“And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. ¹²As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. ¹⁴Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵Truly 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.

[Read v.11-15]

Q: Why would Jesus make the stipulation that they are only called to those deemed “worthy”?

A: It is important to restrict the context of these instructions to those original Apostles and not as general instructions to everyone during any age. The initial presentation of the Messiah and His message was to Israel, those to whom the promises were directly made and to whom the Word of God was given. They were supposed to have a higher knowledge and awareness, therefore they were held to a higher accountability. This has much to do with Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah. Today we do not make this distinction.

Q: How does the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah reflect the similarities in the Apostles’ calling to the ministry of Christ?

A: This is the exact, same consequence Christ publicly proclaimed regarding the rejection of Him by the Jews. The Apostles not only carried the same message and attesting miracles for those in acceptance, but the same consequences for rejection.

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

— Matthew 11:23–24

Application: *The initial work of the original Apostles was first exclusively focused on Israel.*

¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But 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. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

[Read v.16-20]

Q: Did all of the things in v.16-23 occur when Jesus sent out the original Twelve the first time?

A: No. In the character of Old Testament Scripture, Jesus temporarily leaps ahead to share requirements for the future.

Q: What makes us so sure that this set of instructions was not given for the immediate time of those original Twelve whom He was sending out?

1. Firstly because in the previous instructions they are restricted to ministering only to Israel; in v.18 Jesus refers to not just being a testimony to “governors and kings” but “to the Gentiles”.
2. Secondly, the Holy Spirit would not be given to them until after Christ’s death and resurrection, but v.20 stipulates, “it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you”.
3. Thirdly, the persecution spoken of did not come at this time but after Pentecost and on through to the present.

Q: What is meant by the calling to “be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves”?

A: By itself, the wisdom of the serpent is mere cunning and the innocence of the dove little better than weakness. But in combination the wisdom of the serpent saves from unnecessary exposure to danger and the innocence of the dove from the sins and temptations accompanying it.

Point: Christians are not called to unnecessarily volunteer for martyrdom but to be realistic in their discernment of each situation and in determining the appropriate course of action.

Application: Jesus not only provided instructions for the messengers sent out during His time, but for those He anticipated would be sent out in the future.

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. ²²You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. ²³But 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.

[Read v.21-23]

Q: What might incline us to believe these future instructions were given not just for the Apostles of the 1st Century but for Christ’s messengers in the Last Days and, even more specifically, during the Tribulation?

A: These instructions mirror statements Jesus makes in the Olivet Discourse.

“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.

— Luke 21:12–19

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name...Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

— Matthew 24:9, 12-14

Application: Christ’s instructions for His future messengers involves preaching the Gospel and being a testimony to the whole world not just at any time, but with even more fervor in the Last Days as time begins to run out.

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵It 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. ²⁷What 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

[Read v.24-36]

Q: How do these final instructions differ from those previously given?

A: They apply to the present, meaning not just for the original Apostles or for Christ’s messengers in the Last Days, but for His messengers during **every** age and time.

Note: Jesus provides a sort of multi-part teaching to the faithful living at any time in history.

Q: How would you summarize Jesus’ first point in v.24-25?

A: It is **the certainty** that just as He was (and even at present is) persecuted, likewise so will His followers.

Q: How would you summarize Jesus’ second point in v.26-27?

A: It is **the confidence** of what people may do to silence the messenger but who cannot touch the soul.

fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

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

³⁴“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For 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; ³⁶and 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. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

⁴⁰“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. ⁴¹He 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. ⁴²And 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.”

Q: How is this second point enhanced in v.28-31?

A: It is **the confidence** that God is concerned with **both** our body and soul, for providing both for the physical necessities of this life and the one to come.

Q: How would you summarize Jesus’ third point in v.34-36?

A: It is **the conflict** that assuredly comes from making a stand for one’s faith in Christ.

Q: How do v.32-33 characterize the greater need of Christ’s followers in spite of the circumstances and in the course of carrying out His ministry?

A: It is **the confession** – maintaining one’s testimony in and of Christ – which identifies those who are not working for themselves but Christ alone.

Application: *There is no peace without the Prince of Peace. To save our life means to lose it, but to lose our life for His sake means to save it. The message of the Gospel of salvation is not just something preached, but visibly at work in the lives of those authentically called to preach it. The late missionary Jim Elliot wrote, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose”.*

[Read v.37-42]

Q: How do v.37-39 describe the most important core attribute of the true follower and messenger of Christ?

A: They cannot serve Christ without taking up the cross, which means being crucified to self and bearing His reproach. There can be no obstacle or higher priority given to anything else, not even the closest earthly relationships of family.

Q: How do the closing verses describe God’s view of those to whom His messengers are sent?

A: God sees His messengers as in the character of Christ; to reject the servant is to reject the Son.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:20

Application: *In v.24-42 Christ outlines the following:*

1. *His servant’s position (v.24-25)*
2. *His servant’s protection (v.26-32)*
3. *His servant’s privilege (v.33-38)*
4. *His servant’s promise (v.39)*
5. *His servant’s practice (v.40-42)*

Overall Application

Do you think it is possible to truly be a Christian if one does not share the Gospel, suffer for the Gospel, or live in the character of Christ as He Himself ministered the Gospel? What might this say about those who define Christianity in terms other than those used by Christ in this teaching?