

Session 14 The Commissioning of the Twelve Apostles (Mt. 10)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In this session, we will look at Jesus sending out the apostles (Mt. 10:1-42; Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6).
- B. This probably occurred in Galilee in early AD 29, about one year before Jesus' death. Matthew 10 reported Jesus' message in far greater detail than did Mark 6 or Luke 9. This is the second long message in Matthew's gospel—it is often referred to as "The Missionary Discourse." It provides principles for those who are engaged in much travel to do the missionary work of the kingdom.
- C. Initially the instructions (Mt. 10: 5-15, 23) were to the Twelve as they first preached in the cities of Israel. Later the scope of the message was broadened to include the ongoing mission of the Church to reach the nations or Gentiles (Mt. 10:18, 22), so this message is important for today. Jesus presented principles that are for His servants throughout Church history doing the work of ministry.

II. THE APOSTLES WERE GIVEN NEW AUTHORITY (MT. 10:1-8)

- A. The context for the commissioning of the apostles: Jesus' third and final tour of Galilee probably occurred in late AD 28 (Mt. 9:35-38; Mk. 6:6). He called them to pray for laborers for the harvest.
*³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages...preaching...and healing every sickness...
³⁶But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were ...like sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷Then He said..., "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Mt. 9:35-38)*
- B. Jesus commissioned the Twelve (Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:1- 2) This is a part of Jesus' answer to sending out workers for the harvest (Mt. 9:38). The Twelve were just the beginning of workers that Jesus sent to continue His ministry by proclaiming the kingdom message and releasing His power.
¹And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness...²Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew...James...and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew...James...⁴ Simon...and Judas Iscariot... (Mt. 10:1-4)
 - 1. The Scriptures never suggest that the disciples had healed the sick before this time. This is another aspect of Jesus' unprecedented power. Not even Moses or Elijah had authority to impart power like this to their disciples. Elijah's power was imparted to Elisha only after he was taken up to heaven.
 - 2. Later, Jesus commissioned them to reach all nations (Gentiles) and emphasized that all believers can preach the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:17-20). The mission to the Gentiles was mandated following the resurrection of Jesus.

¹⁷And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues...¹⁸they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” (Mk. 16:17-18)

3. *Apostle*: The word “apostle” speaks of one who is *sent with authority* to represent a dignitary. The Twelve had been traveling with Jesus, but were now given a new official title—apostles.
4. Scripture provides four lists of the apostles (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:13-16; Acts 1:13).
5. Choosing twelve apostles corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28), emphasizing their messianic kingdom purpose.
6. Mark added that Jesus sent them out “two by two” (Mk. 6:7). He sent them out in twos to provide relational support, protection, and accountability.

⁷And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two... (Mk. 6:7)

III. JESUS GAVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAVELING (MT. 10:5-15)

- A. Jesus preached this “commissioning message” to prepare them for their new mandate.
- B. Initially their call was to go only to Israel (10:5-6). Only Matthew includes this. Later, Jesus addressed their calling to reach the nations in Gentile lands too (Mt. 10:18; 28:19).

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out...saying: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mt. 10:5-6)

- C. Jesus was highlighting God’s faithfulness to fulfil His covenant promises to Israel, confirming that Christianity is neither a “different” religion, nor a “Gentile” religion. Paul emphasized that his ministry was offered to “the Jew first and also the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16; 11:11-12, 25-26; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19:9; 28:25-28). God brings salvation to the Gentiles as branches grafted onto the “tree of Abraham.”

¹⁶“...salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Rom 1:16)

1. It was important that the Church be birthed in a Jewish context for the Romans 11 dynamics at the end of the age—for Gentiles to have a sense of gratitude towards the Jewish people.
 2. Jesus coming to Israel emphasized God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises and to the continuity of His purposes with Israel. God showed His love for Israel in sending Jesus to them. Jesus is first Israel’s savior; Jewish Christians are faithful to Israel’s prophetic hopes.
- D. Matthew wrote of the Gentiles receiving salvation (Mt. 2:1-12; 3:9; 8:10-11; 10:18; 12:18; 15:21-28; 22:1-10; 21:43; 24:14; 28:19). There was controversy about going to the Gentiles even after the resurrection (Acts 11:1-18; 15:1-20).

1. The Twelve were probably not prepared theologically or spiritually to successfully engage in the cross-cultural evangelism of Gentiles—as seen when John wanted to call fire on a Samaritan village (Lk. 9:52-56).
 2. It is possible that, in the initial stages of their mission, Jesus did not want them to deal with the additional opposition that would come from Jewish leaders towards Jews who related to Gentiles and Samaritans.
- E. The apostles were to preach the same message as John the Baptist (Mt. 3:2) and Jesus (Mt. 4:17), with demonstrations of power to validate and express the good news of the kingdom.
- ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ⁸Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Mt. 10:7-8)***
1. They were to travel to many places preaching and doing miracles. All these miracles except healing lepers are recorded in Acts (3:1-10; 8:7, 13; 9:36-43; 14:8-10; 19:13-16; 20:7-12).
- ²⁸If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Mt. 12:28)***
2. ***Freely give***: They were not to charge for their “healings” because they freely received grace.

IV. WHAT TO TAKE ON THEIR MISSIONARY TRIPS (MT. 10:9-15)

- A. Jesus gave instruction about what provision they should take (Mt. 10:9-15; Mk. 6:8-11; Lk. 9:3-5).
- ⁹Provide neither gold nor silver...in your money belts, ¹⁰nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs...¹¹“Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. ¹²And when you go into a household, greet it. ¹³If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵Assuredly, 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! (Mt. 10:9-15)***
- B. The principles are *simplicity* (to travel lightly without being encumbered), with a sense of *urgency* about their mission and with *dependence* on God and *connection* to the people they serve.
- C. The Church throughout history was not called to fulfill literally each command given for that time (before the resurrection), but we are called to embrace the principles indicated here.
- D. ***Gold in their money belts***: They were not to take enough money to sustain their long outreaches.
1. Jesus did not want them to accumulate money during their trips—this may have been to maintain pure motives in going on trips, as well as demonstrating their sincerity to the people they ministered to and for their safety from thieves while traveling on dangerous roads with a lot of money on them.

2. One temptation associated with connecting money with preaching is that the preacher often adapts their message to make their supporters happy.
 3. The Scripture teaches that those who minister spiritual things are to receive financial blessing from the many (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:4-18; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Thes. 3:9; 3 Jn. 5-8).
- E. ***Nor two tunics or sandals:*** Jesus was telling them to not bring *extra* sandals—Luke clarified that they are not to “carry” sandals and staffs (plural) instead of forbidding them to “wear” sandals (Lk. 10:4). Their essentials—food and extra clothing—was given to them by those who accepted their ministry in the places where they traveled to minister.
- F. These specific restrictions were temporary and not required in the hostile era of the post-resurrection Church. Hospitality among fellow Jews in the towns of Israel was common, but such hospitality was not expected when they were traveling in the Gentile lands.
- ³⁵He said..., “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?” So they said, “Nothing.” ³⁶Then He said to them, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” (Lk 22:35-36)***
- G. ***Inquire who is worthy:*** Jesus give instruction on how they were to secure their lodging (10:11). When entering a town, they were to “search out” people who were “worthy.” They were to stay in the homes of “worthy” hosts, not always the most luxurious home or the people who are most connected to open more doors. A worthy person was one who received their message about Jesus. A host was deemed “unworthy” by not continuing to support Jesus. Leaving their house, as an ambassador of Jesus, would cause a certain measure of blessing to leave.
- H. ***Stay there till you go out:*** They were to remain in the same house to avoid the negative dynamics of jealousies, were a better offer to come along, and it provided some accountability for the traveling disciple whose real character was seen by the host family by being there for more than a few days.
- I. ***Shake off the dust:*** It was customary for a devout Jew to shake the dust from their feet when returning from a Gentile region to symbolically remove the “pollution” of pagan lands from them. Paul invoked this prophetic action on occasion when his message was rejected (Acts 13:51; 18:6).
- J. ***Greet a worthy household:*** The apostles released a powerful blessing on a family who honored God’s work in the apostles—it was much more than a casual greeting that is common in our society.
- K. ***Let your peace return:*** This spoke of taking back a special blessing from a household that decided not to stand with Jesus as pressure in their community rose up against them for hosting an apostle.

- L. **More tolerable for Sodom:** More severe judgment awaits the people in the Jewish towns who rejected Jesus in that generation than the judgment coming on Sodom (Gen. 18:20-19:28).
 - 1. To reject their message after it was confirmed by signs was a sin greater than the sin engaged in by the people of Sodom.
 - 2. The increasing severity was due to them rejecting God's revelation in Christ that was also confirmed by miracles. There are varying degrees of eternal judgment (Lk. 12:47-48).

V. JESUS PREPARED HIS DISCIPLES FOR PERSECUTION (MT. 10:16-25)

- A. Jesus described the persecution that the disciples would experience and how to respond to it.
- B. This persecution came to pass during their ministry after Jesus' resurrection. This passage applies to their lives and the lives of believers throughout church history. The parallels to this passage in Mark and Luke are seen in context to Jesus' message on the end times (Mk. 13:9-13; Lk. 21:12).

¹⁶Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (Mt. 10:16-20)
- C. **Sheep in the midst of wolves:** They need to be prepared for some who would seek to destroy them. How could such lovely message of hope confirmed with miracles be rejected by so many?
- D. **Wise as serpents:** Jesus refers back to His people being as sheep (Mt. 9:36). Jesus called them not to be naive but to exercise good judgment without compromising God's word. This is a call to be cautious of others so to avoid falling into the hands of evil people who would harm them. To be "harmless as doves" means to have pure motives and intentions in our words and actions. In other words, shrewdness with integrity. Some people are harmful as serpents and as foolish as doves!
- E. **Governors and kings:** There is no evidence the disciples appeared before governors and kings before the resurrection. Therefore, Jesus was speaking here of persecution after His resurrection. The apostles were brought before both Jewish and Gentile courts and authorities in the book of Acts (4:1-22; 5:17-41; 6:12-8:3; 12:1-19; 16:19-40; 21:27-28:31) and throughout church history.
- F. **The Spirit of your Father:** The Lord helps defend His people in persecution, even in legal settings. When handed over to authorities to make a legal defense for their faith, they need not be anxious.

- G. Hostility will come from people's families too, not only religious and governmental authorities. Persecution intensifies as family members turn one another over to be put to death (10:21, 34-36).
21Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 22And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. 23When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (Mt. 10:21-23)
- H. ***Hated by all:*** Jesus prepared His disciples for coming rejection.
- I. ***Flee to another city:*** Jesus calls His people to endurance, but not to act with "foolish courage."
- J. Jesus described the implications of the persecutions (10:24-31).
24A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25...If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! ...28And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot 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 copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Mt. 10:24-31)
- K. ***Called Beelzebub:*** The Jewish leaders claimed that Jesus used demonic power to cast demons out of people. They were calling Jesus, "Beelzebub"—the ruler of the demons (Mk. 3:22-27).
- L. ***Fear Him who is able to destroy in hell:*** The very worse that a person can do to you does not compare with what God will do to those who refuse His salvation and leadership.
- M. There are only two possible responses to Jesus' message (10:32-42). This reiterated what Jesus taught at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:13-27).
32Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. (Mt. 10:32-33)
- N. Jesus did not remove relational conflict in this age, but promised opposition (10:34). He taught that people must love one another, but they must love Him more. All relationships in this age will be tested, even family relationships.
34Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" 36and "a man's enemies will be those of his own

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. (Mt. 10:34-38)

O. The Lord’s people must receive God’s messengers and stand together in difficulty (Mt 10:40-42).

⁴⁰He 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 gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. (Mt. 10:40-42)

1. By receiving His messengers, people receive Jesus and His Father. How a person receives His servants expresses their attitude toward the One who sent them. The disciples were righteous men who represented another righteous man, Jesus. The “little ones” in view of the context refer to the persecuted disciples who remain faithful to the Lord.
2. Anyone who assists one of them by giving him even a cup of refreshing cold water will receive a reward from God. Even the smallest act of kindness for one of Jesus’ disciples will not pass without God’s reward.