

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY SEVEN

Listen Well, Think Right, Talk Straight, Travel Light

Matthew 9:35–10:10

We don't need a halo to work in the Lord's harvest fields. We don't need to look pious to be one of His workers, as if we've never known failure. We are just as qualified as any of the twelve disciples.

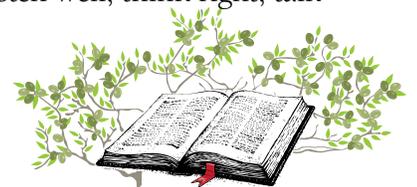
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS had His work cut out for Him. In a little more than three years, He had to convey His message to as many people as possible and accomplish His mission to save the world from sin. On top of that, He had to train His followers to continue His work and “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). No back-up plan existed if His original strategy didn't pan out. The future of Christianity depended on Jesus' disciples carrying His message to the world.

Jesus selected twelve disciples on whose shoulders to place His mantle of ministry. What stood out about these men? Well, from a human point of view, not a lot!

For the most part they were common laboring men, probably having no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation. . . . By any standard of sophisticated culture then and now they would surely be considered a rather ragged aggregation of souls. One might wonder how Jesus could ever use them. They were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment. . . . Not the kind of group one would expect to win the world for Christ.¹

And yet, when Jesus called them to follow Him, they left everything and wholeheartedly entrusted their lives to Him. They were His *mathetes*—“disciples, learners.” But learning was only the beginning. Jesus' goal was to send them out as *apostolos*—“apostles, messengers sent on a mission.” It was a mission Jesus modeled and explained in precise detail. Their part was simple enough that we, too, can do it: listen well, think right, talk straight, and travel light!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Matthew 9:35–10:10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The gospel of Mark states that Jesus chose the twelve disciples to “be with Him” (Mark 3:14 NASB). Being *with* Jesus is just as essential for us. In fact, it’s primary. Picture yourself at His feet now as you learn from His teaching. Ask your heavenly Father to reveal His specific direction for your life through His Son.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Matthew 9:35–10:10*, which portrays Jesus ministering just as before—“teaching in the synagogues,” “announcing the Good News about the Kingdom,” and healing “every kind of disease and illness” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35). An ominous shadow, however, had crept across the backdrop of Jesus’ ministry.

The Pharisees had just accused Jesus of being a satanic counterfeit of the real messiah, saying, “He can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons” (9:34). To attribute Jesus’ power to Satan was the ultimate rejection, and in time, their hatred would emerge as a dark and deadly conspiracy. Until then, Jesus kept on shining His light by loving and helping hurting people and equipping His disciples to do the same.



Observation: Jesus Ministering and Sending

The passage divides nicely into two main sections.² First, we see Jesus ministering to the public. Matthew recorded what Jesus *did*, what He *felt*, and what He *said*. Second, we observe Him focusing on His closest disciples: *selecting* the Twelve and *instructing* them in ministry.

Jesus Ministering to the Public—Matthew 9:35–38

Jesus built His ministry on what three pillars, according to *Matthew 9:35*? These activities reflect generally what Jesus *did*. How did these areas of ministry complement one another?



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In a rare look into Jesus' *feelings*, Matthew picked the strongest word for "compassion" in the Greek language.³ It is a verb, meaning, to show compassion from the core of one's being, our "guts." We've already seen Jesus express His compassion in His touch of a leprous man (Matthew 8:3), His meal with "disreputable sinners" (9:10), His miracle for grief-stricken parents (9:23–25). List below how you might describe the depth of Jesus' compassion to someone who didn't know Him.

What did Jesus see that stirred His compassion? Read [9:36](#) in several versions and write down how Matthew expressed the desperation of the people.

What did Jesus say to His disciples, according to [9:37–38](#)? Who owns the "fields," and to whom does the harvest belong? What work did He say the workers need to do? What is the role of prayer, and who calls and sends the workers?

These verses form a literary bridge between chapters 8–9 and chapter 10, upon which Jesus transitions from *doing* ministry to *sending* His disciples to do what He modeled.



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Jesus Sending His Disciples—Matthew 10:1–10

Matthew 10 opens with Jesus *selecting* the twelve disciples He would send as apostles. What did Jesus give them that was essential to their new role as apostles, according to *Matthew 10:1*?

Compare the lists of the twelve apostles in *10:2–4*; *Mark 3:16–19*; *Luke 6:14–16*; and *Acts 1:13*. Notice the three sets of four individuals in each list. Simon Peter heads the first set of Andrew, James, and John. Philip heads the second set of Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew. And James, son of Alphaeus, heads the third set of Thaddaeus, Simon (the zealot), and Judas Iscariot.

What *instructions* did Jesus give these men, according to *Matthew 10:5–10*? List the specifics of *to whom* they should go, *what* they should say and do, and *how* they should travel.



Interpretation: The Meaning of Jesus' Instructions

How do we interpret Jesus' words to the apostles? According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, the "original disciples had unique apostolic authority," and they "had a unique scope" of ministry.⁵ Consult page 189 of Pastor Chuck's commentary to answer the following questions.



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What apostolic authority sets them apart from us (*Matthew 10:1, 8*)?

The apostle's scope of ministry was unique to that time in biblical history (*10:5–6*). Why do you think Jesus wanted them to announce the kingdom to the Jews only?

Why did Jesus instruct them to travel light, to not “acquire” money “or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff” (*10:9–10 NASB*)? How do you think traveling light benefited their ministry? How do these instructions relate to us today?



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Correlation: Expanding the Scope

Jesus' instructions to the apostles were meant for a specific era in God's plan. As people received or rejected His message, the Lord broadened the scope of ministry beyond the Jews. Fast-forward to the time of Christ's ascension, after He had died on the cross and been resurrected.

What were Jesus' instructions to the apostles in [Acts 1:8](#)?

How did the apostles continue the ministry that Christ had earlier commissioned them to do, according to [2:42–43](#)?

While the apostles initially preached only to the Jews, what did their ministry as the foundation of the church eventually accomplish, according to [Ephesians 2:17–22](#)?



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Jesus sent His apostles in His name and with His power to cast out evil spirits and heal diseases to validate the same message He preached, “the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 10:7). The apostles became true extensions of Jesus—gathering souls for the Lord’s harvest.



Application: Important Principles for Them and Us

The fields are just as ripe for harvest today as they were in the days of the apostles. What principles can we apply as Jesus sends us as His laborers?

First, *the apostles’ motives and methods are similar to ours*. We carry the message of Christ with the same heart of compassion. And we always begin every effort by praying for the Lord “to send more workers into his fields” (Matthew 9:38).

Second, *reaping the harvest calls for the same roles*. We must have *goers* who take the message to the lost and *givers* who support the effort.

Third, *we must have the same character and commitment modeled by the apostles*. They were authentic, not phony or hypocritical. They lived in simplicity and were not greedy, proud, or selfish. Their integrity and moral purity made them trustworthy.

Pick a principle modeled by the apostles that the Lord may be urging you to follow. What instructions might Jesus be giving you today based on that principle?

Do you ever feel inadequate to follow Christ’s instructions? How might the Lord be encouraging you?



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If you think you could never make Christ's list of disciples, you might be surprised. Jesus sees beyond our faults and failures to the person we can become in Him. He finds the God-given gemlike qualities inside us and polishes them until they shine for His glory. He's the master at doing the extraordinary with ordinary folks like us!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for calling me to be a worker in Your field. Shape me into just the right tool for Your use. I need Your work in me today so I can do the work You have designed for me. I long for the joy of harvesting souls for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1963, 1964), 22–23.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
3. The gospel writers reserved this special word to describe Jesus or a character in His parable who displays God's compassion, such as the prodigal son's father (for example, [Matthew 14:14](#); [15:32](#); [Luke 7:12–14](#); [15:20](#)).
4. Some disciples were called other names. Thaddaeus and Judas, son of James, are the same. Simon the Cananaean is also called Simon the Zealot. Bartholomew is called Nathanael in John 1:45. Thomas is called Didymus ("twin") in John 11:16; 20:24; and 21:2. James is called "the Less" in Mark 15:40. Matthew is called Levi in Luke 5:27, 29.
5. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 189.

