

Matthew, chapter 10-11
The Disciples Follow Jesus into Mission

Jesus sends His disciples on their first ‘short-term’ mission to train and prepare them for their [and our] age-long Great Commission mission: preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and making disciples

CONTEXT & MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1 / Again, we are facing the insurmountable task of surveying and summarizing a large portion of Matthew in just a few words and minutes. But, what we do want to do is make the connections of this portion of Matthew with what has come before and what will come after—and also with Matthew’s overall themes and writing plan.

/ So, first of all, let’s set **ch 10** in the context of Matthew overall. **Ch 10** is the second of the five major discourses Matthew records that Jesus delivered. All of them will flesh out Jesus’ final Great Commission charge in **ch 28.16-20**. So, all of these discourses are, in some way, ‘making disciples of Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven’; then they will, in turn, **Go, and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**. The first major discourse, **chs 5-7**, answer the question: “What is a disciple? And, how are citizen-disciples of the Kingdom of Heaven to live—both in their ‘internal discipleship’ of character and conduct, and in their ‘external’ discipleship in their relationships with others?” Now, this discourse will answer the question: “How are traveling evangelists to conduct themselves on their evangelistic missions?”

/ Because that’s what Jesus is doing in **ch 10**: He is sending them out on their first ‘short-term mission’ to train them and prepare them for their eventual age-long, world-wide mission after He ascends back into Heaven. That is why I have titled this lesson: “The disciples follow Jesus into Mission.” *I want to note up-front here that I’m following the outline and section divisions from Daniel M. Doriani in the ESV Expository Commentary because he presents such a clear, concise of the flow of these two content-filled chapters.* I have profited so much from his learned understanding, exposition, and application of this Gospel.

I | ch 10.1-4 | Jesus calls and sends His disciples to the Mission ... and gives them His authority—the same authority He has exercised in chs 8-9.

1 / Jesus Himself does just what He has commanded His disciples to do: He has just commanded them to **“therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”** **Luke 6.12: In these days He went out into the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His twelve, whom He named apostles.** Jesus teaches us both in word and deed that **The Kingdom of Heaven** advances both power and personnel through prayer—praying to God to make it advance through our agency.

2 / Now that Jesus has given His disciples an ‘elementary lesson’ in discipleship, both by teaching them in **ch 5-7** and by having them accompany Him in **ch 8-9**, it is now time to send them out ‘on their own,’ although He will be with them in His authority. NOTE the continued theme and thread of **authority** that Matthew has highlighted in **chs 7.28-29; 8.5-13; 9.1-8; etc.**

3 / Another note on what discipleship is: When Jesus called these twelve as His band of disciples, **Mark 3.13-15** says **“that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach.”** So disciples are those who commit their lives to ‘being with Jesus’ and ‘becoming like Him’ [see **ch 10.24-25**]. We must do and become like Jesus!

II | ch 10.5-15 | Jesus charges His disciples to follow His ministry message and patterns

1 / vv 5-10 | They must preach what they have heard Him preach and do the works they have seen Him do ... with His authority He is giving them. If the Great Commission is in **ch 28**, we might call this

the ‘first commission,’ It is smaller in scope and duration. This would be a ‘short-term mission,’ and it would be limited to their immediately surrounding cities, towns, and communities of **the lost sheep of the house of Israel [see ch 9.36]**. This commission is more limited in scope because Jesus Himself had come first to the people of His own covenant nation, and also, that is where they were in their geographical context. Also, the disciples would have to be trained and get used to the inclusion of the Gentile people of the New Covenant as Jesus continues to instruct them. The commission Jesus gives them in vv 7-8 was the same mission He Himself had been fulfilling as we have seen in the previous chapters. They should go on this mission with no more than they had on their persons and backs. Jesus is teaching them that when they go on mission for Him, they must learn to trust Him to supply their needs. Besides, they will return to Him shortly to report back to Him.

2 / vv 11-15 | **They must seek out receptive hearers of the Gospel and stay with them until they leave that city.** Their method was simple: go from one town and village to another [and there were many in their immediately surrounding environs]; they must announce why they had come [**“And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’”**]; and they should wait for someone to receive them and their message of the Gospel; and stay with them—receive their housing and hospitality—until they departed for another town. The people’s reception of the Gospel—or lack thereof—will be judged upon them in the **Day of Judgment**.

III | ch 10.16-25 | Jesus forewarns and prepares them to expect hatred, opposition, and persecution because of their witness to Him ... and how they should respond to it

1 / vv 16-20 **They should expect persecution from the religious communities and authorities.** Jesus warns them that everyone will not welcome them, just as everyone had not welcomed Jesus. They had already witnessed that opposition in the previous chapters. Much of that **persecution** [v 23] will come from the religious community and leadership. *Although, in v 18, Jesus does give them a prospective ‘heads-up’ that later on, they will also encounter the same persecution from Gentile authorities.*

2 / vv 21-23 | **They should also expect persecution and separation from their own families.** They will also encounter hatred, opposition, persecution, and even death at the hands of their closest family relationships. The Gospel divides, separates, and ruptures the nearest and dearest relationships of our lives.

3 / vv 24-25 | **In all of this, they will be becoming like Him—which is what a true disciple is.** But a true disciple will be committed and content with becoming like his Master and Teacher, Jesus Christ. When we identify with Jesus, they will treat us the same ways they treated Him.

IV | ch 10.26-33 | They should faithfully fulfill their witnessing mission without fear

1 / vv 26-31 | **They should ‘fear not’ because even if they are physically killed for their witness to Christ, they are valued by their Heavenly Father—and their physical death will usher them into eternal life.** This theme of **“have no fear of them, do not fear, fear not”** will be repeated in vv 26, 28, 31. This is the thread that ties this part of Jesus’ instruction together. The reasons why we do not fear whatever earthly and physical threats, dangers, discomforts, or even loss of our lives is because we have an over-riding **fear of God**, a Godly fear of worship and reverence. And besides, God has promised to value us as His own treasured people.

2 / vv 32-33 | **Rather than being afraid of their physical persecutors and denying Christ and giving up on their Gospel mission—they must faithfully acknowledge Christ...even to the end of their lives.** So we will **acknowledge** Jesus before men in our convictions and faithful witness. And He promises **“I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in Heaven.”**

V | ch 10.34-42 | Jesus commands our supreme love and loyalty even over our closest and dearest relationships ... but He also promises His richest eternal rewards

1 / vv 34-37 | **We must love Christ more than our closest family relationships.** This is a follow-up commentary on what Jesus has already taught before in vv 21-22. The **sword** that Jesus brings is not a

sword of physical warfare, but rather the **sword** of choice: whom will our hearers choose to follow and serve? The **peace** that Jesus brings is not the peace of everybody coexisting and living ‘in perfect harmony,’ but rather the **peace** of a right relationship in God in **The Kingdom of Heaven**. This **peace** as we surrender to the **God of peace**, trust in the **Prince of Peace**, and believe the **Gospel of peace**. But everyone will not; many will not; and they will turn on those who do. But we must commit to follow Christ, loving Him more than even those who are our nearest and dearest physical relations.

2 / vv 38-39 | We must Christ more than our personal comfort—or even our own life. Following Jesus will mean being willing to **take His cross** as our cross. To **take his cross** means to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ everything Jesus Himself suffered—slander, rejection, reproach, disdain, hatred, persecution, and eventually even death. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously said: “Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him and prepare to die.”

3 / vv 40-42 | But Jesus also promises rewards to those who receive His Gospel through our witness—as well to those who assist us in our mission. But whatever we may suffer and lose for the sake of our faithfulness in following, identifying with, serving, and witnessing for Christ—Jesus promises **reward**. The **reward** that Jesus promises and that we wait to receive is His Presence and pleasure in **The Kingdom of Heaven** [see v 32]. We might note here also—as Jesus emphasizes—that His **reward** is promised not only to His witnesses who go forth in His Name proclaiming His Gospel, but also each and every one who supports, assists, and encourages them in their ministries. I have personally called upon God to bless and **reward** countless friends and benefactors who have blessed me along my way.

4 / ch 11.1 | NOTE here Matthew’s transition from the instructive ‘Discipleship Discourse’ in ch 10 to the next narrative passage in ch 11. After Jesus had instructed and sent out the twelve disciples on this training mission, He Himself departed to continue the same mission work He had already begun. See 4.23; 9.35.

VI | ch 11.1-6 | Jesus receives and responds to some probing questions from John the Baptist concerning His Kingdom mission

1 / vv 2-3 | John sends word to Jesus via his disciples asking: “Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?” John the Baptist had been imprisoned by Herod Antipas because John dared to call him out over his adulterous marriage to his brother’s wife [see ch 14.1-12]. John would conclude his momentous prophetic ministry of announcing the coming of the Messiah by being beheaded. What we need to see here is multi-faceted, one of which is that John serves in that moment of the kinds of persecution and suffering Jesus has been warning His disciples to expect. We don’t believe that John had any ‘doubts’ or second thoughts about whether Jesus was the promised, prophesied Messiah. But whatever questions he may have been struggling with may have come from what he perceived to be the missing elements of judgment against sinners that would accompany Messiah when He came. Remember, this message of judgment and the **wrath to come** was a major theme of John’s ministry and message [see ch 3.7-12]. John also understood that he had fulfilled the prophetic pronouncements of God’s wrath and judgment found in **Malachi, chapter 4**. So maybe he was wondering: “Where’s the wrath? Where’s the promised judgment on the enemies of the Kingdom of God?”

2 / vv 4-6 | Jesus lovingly re-assures John the Baptist that “Yes! I am the One you announced!” and He offers the prophesied evidences of His Messianic mission. Jesus returns the tender and reassuring message back to John: “**Go and tell John what you see and hear...**” and then began citing His miraculous Kingdom ministry they had witnessed. ALL of these Kingdom works were prophesied repeated by the prophets, especially Isaiah: **Isaiah 29.18-19; 35.3-7; 42.1-7; et. al.** What John could not immediately perceive [along with the other disciples] was that there would be another coming of the Messiah at the end of this age to fulfill the **wrath and judgment** exercises of Messiah’s mission. But, not right now...

VII | ch 11.7-19 | Jesus publicly commands John the Baptist to the crowds

1 / vv 7-15 | Jesus gives a resounding affirmation of the prophesied and prophetic ministry God had called John to fulfill. After personally re-assuring John with His returned message, Jesus then turns to the crowds. Lest they should think John had discredited himself or that Jesus had diminished him in any way, Jesus publicly re-affirms John's greatness in **The Kingdom of Heaven** and in the prophetic/historical plan of God. Jesus begins by asking six rhetorical questions to remind John's hearers what they had expected—and what they found—in John. Then, Jesus links John with **Malachi 3.1**. This Malachi reference is also closely linked with **Isaiah 40.3-5 [see Matthew 3.1-6]**. All of these affirmations establish John's greatness in the **Kingdom of Heaven**. John the Baptist was **Elijah who is to come**. And yet, those of that generation—and we in our generations—are **greater than he** in that we have received the fulfilled Gospel ministry and message of the Christ that John had been sent to announce!

2 / vv 16-19 | At the same time, Jesus soundly rebukes that unbelieving and unreceiving generation for their stubbornness and rejection of both John and Himself—Jesus. Jesus issues this stinging evaluation and rebuke against the hearers of that generation. No doubt many of them were criticizing John, even in his imprisonment, and were using his questions to diminish him and highlight their own objections to Jesus' ministry. Quoting a familiar proverb among them, Jesus compares them to a bunch of petty, petulant, moody, sulking children who refuse to play along with their playmates in the marketplaces. As they would be hanging out together, one of them would suggest "Hey, let's play wedding. I'll play the flute, and you all dance." Or, "Hey, let's play funeral. I'll sing the dirge, and you all mourn and wail." Both of these play-alongs were common, familiar scenes that often played out in their culture. But the stubborn, recalcitrant playmates would sulk, fold their arms, scowl, and say, "No! I'm not playing along with your games." Jesus turned it on them to say that they just refused to hear God's messengers of **The Kingdom of Heaven** regardless of how they came. John the Baptist was a more eccentric and ascetic prophet, but they just dismissed him as being a lunatic. Jesus came socializing and associating with those He had come to save, and they accused Him of being "**a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!**" They refused to be pleased. They already had their religion and kingdom—and they refused to receive or 'play along' with anyone who didn't conform to their program.

VIII | ch 11.20-24 | Jesus continues to denounce three prominent cities who were the most familiar with His ministry, the most blessed by His presence among them ... and yet the most unrepentant in their response to Him

1 / And so, to be more specific, Jesus 'names names' of the three most local and prominent cities where His ministry up to that time had been concentrated: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. He had come to them all, but they had stubbornly refused to receive Him and **The Kingdom of Heaven** and repent.

2 / **It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for them.** All of these cities of the OT times were destroyed by the judgments of God for their wickedness—but they also didn't have the light and knowledge of the ministry of Christ among them.

IX| ch 11.25-30 | Jesus continues to extend mercy to all who will come to Him for salvation and rest ... just as His disciples have—who have believed in Him

1 / Jesus then thanks the Father for His sovereign choice and enlightenment He had given to those who had believed in Him. He reiterates here again what He will confirm in the Great Commission: "**All things have been handed over to me by my Father...**" He is the Sovereign, exclusive, undisputed **King Jesus of the Kingdom of Heaven**. The gift of faith and salvation is God's sovereign prerogative as taught all throughout Scripture.

2 / But Jesus concludes this portion of this Gospel ministry by once again calling: "**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden [see ch 9.36], and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**" THIS is Grace and mercy! THIS is salvation! And THIS is discipleship!