

## Jesus Sent the Twelve to Preach and Heal

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children, by our example, how to obey Christ and pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into His harvest. Jesus told His disciples that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. That is why He asked them to pray the Lord of the harvest. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus sent the very ones that He asked to pray into His harvest field.

In Matthew 10:1-4, we read, “And 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 and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” Jesus had told the disciples to pray that the Father would send forth laborers into His harvest. In these verses, we see that the disciples were the answer to their own prayers.

In these verses, we see that Jesus sent out the Twelve to gain experience in ministry. Jesus gave the twelve special power as He sent them out to minister. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” In these verses from Hebrews, we see that God chose to confirm the message of the apostles through various signs and wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This was done by the Father because that was His will.

We also see the message that Jesus gave the Twelve as He sent them out to preach. Luke 9:1-2 says, “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” This shows that Jesus told them to preach the kingdom of God. The “kingdom of God” is defined in Luke 17:20-21, where we read, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’” The disciples were to make it clear that the way people enter the kingdom of God is through a change of heart. Earlier, in Matthew 3:2, John the Baptist said as he preached, “...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” “Repentance” means *to have sorrow for sin that leads one to turn from sin and turn to God*. It is a change of heart that results in a changed life. The “kingdom of God” refers to the time in the future, when Jesus will rule on the earth, in Revelation 20:4-6.

We are also given the names of the twelve apostles. By comparing this list of the twelve with the

other lists of the twelve, we see that Christ very possibly had the disciples divided into three smaller groups. This would have made it very possible for Jesus to teach each of the small groups as they walked along the road while traveling from place to place. Luke 6:14-16 gives us one of the other places where the twelve are listed. Those verses say, “Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.” The first name, in every list of the twelve, is Peter. Andrew, James and John are always the next three mentioned after Peter. Philip is always number five on the lists, followed by Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas. James the son of Alphaeus is always number nine in the list, followed by Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot.

Thaddaeus is also called either Lebbaeus or Judas. Simon is called the Canaanite or the Zealot. The last name, on every list of the twelve, is Judas Iscariot. The various lists also describe the actions of Judas. He is the final one listed in Mark 3:16-19. Verse 19 says, “And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.” Matthew and Mark both mention that Judas betrayed Jesus, while Luke says that he also became a traitor. After Judas killed himself, Acts 1:24-26 says, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Here, we see that the Lord guided in the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot after his death.

We go on to read that Jesus gave the twelve specific instructions before He sent them out to preach about the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 10:5-8 says, “These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.’” We see that Jesus began these instructions by telling the disciples what they were not to do this first time as they went out to share about the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God in the other Gospels). They were not to go to areas where the Gentiles lived. They were not to go to the Samaritans. Later, they would be told to go to both of these groups, but Jesus wanted them to learn to make contacts with other Jews first. The Jews had a background similar to the twelve. This is a helpful principle to remember when training others.

That is why Jesus told the twelve to go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Other Jews were familiar with the Old Testament, as they had all grown up in the synagogues. Acts 15:21 says, “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” The Jews were taken out of the area of Israel during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Babylonians, in 586 BC. They realized that if they were going to survive as a people, they would all need to become familiar with the Old Testament. As a result, in every city where the Jews were scattered, if there were ten or more Jewish men in that city, they were required to build a synagogue so that they could read the Old Testament. However, although the Jews were all familiar with the Old Testament, they did not understand how to enter the kingdom of God. This is illustrated by the question of Nicodemus, in John 3:3-

4, where we read, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” As a result, they were lost sheep.

The message that the disciples were to preach as they went was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” John the Baptist had preached this same message as he told the people to prepare for the coming of the Christ. Matthew 3:1-2 says, “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” Now, the twelve were to preach that same message as Jesus sent them out in teams of two to the various cities and villages. Later, Jesus sent out a total of 70 disciples. Luke 10:9 gives the message that they were to preach as they went to the cities where Jesus would soon come. That verse says, “‘And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”” Here, we see that all shared the same message as they prepared for the coming of Jesus.

Jesus also gave the twelve disciples various signs, to the Jews, to verify their message. In 1 Corinthians 1:22, we read, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” John 20:30-31 says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” The Jews required signs in order to believe. As a result, Jesus gave the twelve four specific signs to verify their message about the kingdom of heaven. They were to heal the sick. They were to cleanse the lepers. They were to raise the dead. They were to cast out demons. Jesus also did each of these four things as a part of His ministry to show that He came from God. However, most of the Jews did not believe.

Matthew records a final instruction that Jesus gave the twelve before He sent them to preach the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give.” The word translated “freely” means *undeservedly or freely*. Romans 3:21-24 says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” These verses remind us that each person who receives the righteousness of God has that righteousness placed on him as a free gift. We did nothing to earn the right to receive the righteousness of God. As a result, we are declared right in the sight of God, freely by the grace of the Father, because Christ paid the entire price to redeem us from sin.

The disciples were to give the message freely. They were to perform the signs freely. Acts 8:18-19 says, “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” Jesus knew there would be people like Simon, the sorcerer, and so He wanted to make certain the disciples did not charge anyone anything for healing. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to freely share the message of the Gospel with all. May the Lord richly bless you as you model what it means to give freely.

