

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel – Part 8

Matthew 10:1-4 [New King James] *“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 Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”*

Jesus Christ called people from all walks of life – fishermen, political activists, tax collector, rich, poor, educated or uneducated.

Today many people think that only certain people are fit to follow Jesus Christ and be His servants, but this was **not** the attitude shown by Jesus Christ.

God can use anyone, no matter how insignificant they appear to this present society.

If you feel small and useless, remember God uses ordinary people to do His extraordinary work.

[The disciples are also listed in **Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16** and **Acts 1:13**].

Isaiah 6:8-9 [New King James] *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’ And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’”*

God is always looking for people to use to spread His message to humanity, even if the vast majority do not respond at this time.

Isaiah 6:11-13 [New King James] *“Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump.’”*

This is a direct mention of the worldwide situation at the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, [Matthew 24:21-22].

Jesus Christ called these men, He did **not** compel or coerce, He invites, seeks volunteers. This call will eventually come to every person who has ever lived, a summons which they can accept or refuse.

Matthew 10:5-8 [New King James] *“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.**’”*

These men were appointed from among the disciples. The word disciple means a learner, all who are willing to be used by Jesus Christ must be willing to learn more every day.

These men were chosen to be with Jesus Christ throughout His ministry, [**Mark 3:14**].

If we are to do the work of Jesus Christ in the world we must be constantly with Him, [John 15:1-8].

These men were called to be apostles, [**Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13**].

The word “*apostle*” literally means “*one sent forth.*” It is also the word for an envoy or an ambassador.

The twelve were forbidden to go to the Gentiles; that meant that their first journey was limited to Galilee.

This was **not** a permanent command, for Jesus Christ talked to the woman from Samaria, [John 4:4-42] healed a Syro-Phoenician woman, [Matthew 15:28] and finally command these same men to go to all nations, [Matthew 28:19-20].

There were good reasons for this first limitation for the disciples.

The Jews had in God’s scheme of things a very special place, they were given the first offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, [Romans 1:16].

It is true that they rejected Jesus Christ, but the whole of their history up to that time was designed to give them the first opportunity.

The twelve were not equipped to preach to the Gentiles, they had neither the background, nor knowledge, nor technique.

Before the gospel message could be effectively brought to the Gentiles a man with Paul’s life and background had to emerge.

A good leader knows that his point of attack must be a chosen point, for a diffused attack invites failure.

Galilee, as we have seen, was most open of all parts of Palestine to a new message, [Matthew 4:12-17].

They were to “*heal the sick,*” the Greek word used is “*asthenēs*” meaning without strength, weak, both physical and mental.

They were to “*raise the dead.*” This is more than a physical death, it can mean “*spiritually*” dead, [Matthew 8:22] in sins, blinded by Satan to their real condition and need, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9].

“*Cleanse the lepers*” – the twelve were to bring the cleansing to those whose life was polluted by sin, their minds and hearts that caused unclean actions in their lives.

“*Cast out demons*” – a demon-possessed person is in the grip of an evil power and no longer master of their actions.

Jesus Christ came **not** only to forgive our past sin but to break the power of sin in our lives, liberating us from the enslavement of sin by becoming a bond slave of Jesus Christ, [Romans 6:1-6; Romans 12:1-2].

“*Freely you have received, freely give*” –

Because God has blessed us with the understanding of the purpose of human life, and a vision of a wonderful world tomorrow after Jesus Christ’s Second Coming, also freedom from the penalty of our sins, [Romans 6:23] and the gift of the Holy Spirit, [Luke 11:13] that the very character of the Eternal God may be formed in us, [Galatians 5:22-25] followed by the promise of eternal life as a gift, [Romans 6:23].

We should freely offer our lives for the Eternal God to us to bring the same blessings on other human beings, [Romans 12:1].

A Jewish rabbi was bound by law to give his teaching freely for nothing, forbidden to take money for teaching the law which Moses had freely been given by God.

In only one situation could a rabbi receive payment; that is for teaching a child, for teaching a child was the parents' task, and no-one else should be expected to spend time and labour doing what was the parents' own duty to do, but teaching God's Word had to be given to the child without any payment.

Matthew 10:9-15 [New King James] *“Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for that city!”*

“Bag” is the Greek word “*pěra*” meaning a pouch for holding food, but could also refer to a beggar's collecting bag.

With these instructions Jesus Christ was speaking words that were familiar to a Jew. The Talmud tells us that “*no-one is to go to the Temple Mount with staff, girdle of money or dusty feet,*” making it quite clear that they had left everything which had to do with trade, business and worldly affairs behind.

Jesus Christ was telling His disciples to treat the whole world as the Temple of God. **A person who is a servant of God must show by their attitude to physical things that their first interest is the will of God.**

Finally, Jesus Christ says that the workman deserves their sustenance, so it is the duty of the people of God to see that a servant of God receives reasonable support. This passage of scripture lays an obligation on teacher and on people alike.

“*If the household is worthy*” is practical advice not to reside in a house that had an evil reputation for morals, conduct or fellowship, would seriously hinder the effectiveness of their message.

It is interesting that just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, listed as a proverb for wickedness, [Matthew 11:23-24; Luke 10:12-13; Luke 17:29; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7] they had rejected the messengers of God.

Yet even at their worst, Sodom and Gomorrah had never had the opportunity to reject the message that Jesus Christ had brought from God the Father.

That is why it would be easier for them in the final judgement than those towns and villages in Galilee.

Matthew 10:16-26 [New King James] *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But 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; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now 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. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When 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. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”*

This warning of persecution because of the message they bring to the people, is **not** isolated to the sending of the twelve apostles on this occasion, Matthew is looking forward to the spread of this message worldwide, [Matthew 28:19] and the Satan-driven hostility that his servants would face, [John 17:14-18]. The truth will triumph in the end, so do not fear those who try to hide it from others, [verse 26] as Satan and his ministers do, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15]. Even if we are involved in suffering because of the message we bring of Jesus Christ as the only way for salvation from eternal death, [Acts 4:12] even if we face Satan in this world, [Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 12:9-12; Revelation 20:4] the day will come when the truth of the power of the persecutor and the heroism of the Christian witness will be seen.

Matthew 10:27-28 [NIV] *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

In these two verses we are shown the true function of a preacher.

First they must listen to what Jesus Christ, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit in them, is telling them. Then not to be afraid to speak boldly the message they have received.

No persecution that humans may bring on us for preaching the Truth as found in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, can compare to the ultimate fate of a person who refuses to repent and obey the will of their Creator God.

Matthew 10:29-31 [New King James] *“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

The third fear to avoid is based on the great personal love and compassion that the Eternal Creator God has for every human being who is made in His image.

The Greek does not refer to the death of a sparrow, but every time its hopping feet touch the ground.

Matthew 10:32-33 [New King James] *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”*

The Greek word translated “confesses” is “homologeō” meaning to speak the same thing, to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, showing a deep conviction of facts, even if this brings persecution or death.

A true Christian can never escape the duty of being different to this world’s society. For it is **not** our duty to conform to this world’s society but to seek through faith in what Jesus Christ has done for all humanity and a willingness to be a disciple of His, reflecting His love and compassion for all humanity, to challenge people to conform to the life of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:7-11 [New King James] *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. **And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.**’”*

It is through this confession of loyalty to Jesus Christ that we overcome the influence of Satan in society.

Matthew 10:34-39 [New King James] *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For 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’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ 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. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”*

Nowhere is the sheer honesty of Jesus Christ more vividly displayed than in this statement, He tells us exactly what to expect if we are faithful to Him and confess Him to other people. Even our own family can turn against us.

“Take his cross” – we have to read what Paul told the Christians at Rome in his letter to them to understand what this means.

Romans 6:1-8 [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, **knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,”*

Note it is our old way of life that we crucify on the cross, a painful process that does not happen overnight.

Yet this is essential if we are to work for our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Matthew 10:40-42 [New King James] *“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He 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. And 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.”*

This is referring to the reward of those who receive a Christian and the message they bring as an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 [New King James] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation**, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

The job of an ambassador is a very important job and cannot be taken lightly for people will judge the country or person by the character and actions of the ambassador.

As with every true Christian or recently-born Christian, Jesus Christ is telling us in **Matthew 10:40-42** that our reward will be according to how we treat other human beings in the light of what has or is being revealed to us through the life, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded in God’s Word, the Christian Bible.