

BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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MT. 10 MINISTERIAL INSTRUCTIONS: WHERE DID THE 12 APOSTLES GO?



In the last verse of Matthew 9, Jesus asked for prayers so God would “send laborers to His harvest,” that is, faithful ministers that would take the true Gospel to the world. So now in chapter 10, Christ names twelve of those “laborers” to become apostles (Gk. “sent out ones”) and to head this Work of God once He finished His ministry. 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 Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. 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’” (Mt. 10:1-6).

So the first priority of the 12 apostles was to take the gospel to the 12 tribes of Israel. They would first go to the Jews, made up of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, most of the Levites and a remnant of the other tribes. These tribes were either in Judah or dispersed throughout the Roman Empire (and Babylon).

The other 10 “lost” tribes were scattered throughout Mesopotamia, Armenia, Parthia, Scythia, northwestern India and northwestern Europe, including France and Great Britain. The apostle Paul would have the main commission to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7). Eventually, the gospel would reach the entirety of the world in an orderly manner. Each apostle would have his region of action.

As Mr. Herbert Armstrong explains, “Generations later, Jesus of Nazareth, well knowing where they had migrated, sent His twelve original apostles to make known to them His gospel of God’s Kingdom—God’s government! It was the apostle Paul who was sent to the Gentiles. Did you never wonder why, after Acts 15:29, we read no more of the twelve apostles? Except for a

trip by Peter to Babylon, they had gone to ‘lost Israel!’” (*The U.S. and Britain in Prophecy*, p. 127).

Josephus, the Jewish historian that lived in the same century as Jesus, knew approximately where these 12 tribes were in his days. He said, “Wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 11:5).

Did Jesus Christ forget about those “lost” tribes of the house of Israel—that is, those other ten tribes? Of course not, for he said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice: and there will be one flock and one shepherd” ((John 10:16).

As a Jew, Jesus understood perfectly well the difference between the house of Judah and the house of Israel. One of the key proofs of this is in Mt. 19:28, where He shows how He still considers all 12 tribes to be existing in his day and in the future. He said, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt. 19:28). If the 12 apostles were just sent to the Gentiles, it wouldn’t make much sense to train them to be over the 12 tribes of Israel in the Millennium. These 10 tribes, although hidden from the eyes of the world, still do exist and are not considered Gentiles.

Remember it was to Paul and his co-workers who had been commissioned to go to the Gentiles, as he wrote, “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised [Gentiles] had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcision was to Peter” (Galatians 2:7). Christ told Paul, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21).

In this regard, in his book, *In Search for the Twelve Apostles*, the historian William McBirnie said, “Eusebius tells us the Apostles ‘divided the world’ and set forth to all points of the compass...’At the beginning of Book III of his *History of the Church*, after having described the Fall of Jerusalem, Eusebius says ‘the inhabited world’ was divided into zones of influence among

the Apostles. Thomas in the region of the Parthians, John in Pontius and Rome, and Andrew in Scythia" (p. 43).

In general, later history would place the other 10 apostles (not including Peter and John) in the following areas: **Andrew**—Scythia; **Simon the Zealot**—North Africa and England; **James, son of Alpheus**—Syria; **Thomas**—Parthia and north-western India; **Bartholomeu** - Armenia y Frigia; **Judas** (not Iscariot)—Mesopotamia; **Philip**—France, Scythia; **Matthew**—Persia; **James, son of Zebedee**—Spain, Ireland, and England; Matthias [who replaced Judas Iscariot]—Armenia (Main source: William McBurnie, Herman Hoeh).

Then Jesus instructs them, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8). In other words, just as they freely received God's truths, so should they freely give the truth to others. Ministers should not charge for their services, neither should God's truths be sold. That is one of the chief functions of the first tithe--to provide the means to carry out God's work and to sustain the ministry without having to make it a commercial venture or having to plead with the public for money. This is the reason *The Good News* magazine, the booklets and the rest of the publications are given out free.

Strange as it may seem, by freely giving away the publications, it is one of the biblical signs that identifies the true church, because it shows it is truly obeying the Word of God. Many churches amass great wealth by selling its publications and by receiving public, political or corporate funds, but not the true church, which does not mix religion with politics or business in order to avoid being influenced or compromised with the world.

Jesus goes on to say, "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" (Mt. 10:9-10). Christ explained His servants should live from the tithes and offerings that are given to the Church. Paul added, "Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

In the New Testament, we see the tithes were transferred from the Levitical ministry and priesthood to the ministry of Jesus Christ, according to the Melchizedek priesthood, and those are who Christ designates in His church as

ministers through the laying on of hands by the ministry. We read about this in Hebrews 7:5-22 about this change in the law: "And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham...for the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law...For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of the fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life."

Jesus also instructed His disciples not to preach from house to house. Notice what He said in the parallel passage of Luke 10:7, "Do not go from house to house." Christ knew this would be a big temptation to go door to door, but it went against the biblical principles of not imposing the truth on other people. Since the majority of the churches consider this time to be the only day of salvation, they are desperate now to "save souls for Jesus." But we know there will be other opportunities for the world to receive the gospel message—mainly in the coming kingdom of God, especially during the Second Resurrection.

Jesus explains the ways they can preach the gospel. One of the most effective ways, that the apostle Paul often used, was to go to the synagogues and wait to be invited to preach. Another way was to go to a public place or a meeting where people could listen and then later see who was "worthy," meaning those that were interested and wanted to talk with them privately. In those places where one was not welcomed, they were simply to go to the next town, for God would judge these people later (Mt. 10:14-15).

The linguistic expert Robertson explains who was considered "worthy": "What makes a house worthy? 'It would naturally be readiness to receive the preachers and their message' (McNeile). Hospitality is one of the noblest graces and preachers receive their share of it. The apostles are not to be burdensome as guests."

Christ continues: "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 speaks, 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" (Mt. 10:16). Here He describes how a minister of God should conduct himself. He should be meek and harmless as a dove, but wise and prudent as a serpent. Serpents don't wander around in parks as doves do, so it shows one should not needlessly call attention to oneself. That is why he should not cast the pearls of truth to just anyone and especially not the unconverted. They should be wary of the praises of men and not get caught up in politics. We should be calm under fire and even when arrested for preaching God's truths. God will inspire what will be said. Notice Jesus explained we would be "saved" if we persevere to the end and not at the beginning of the conversion process.

Christ also prophetically mentioned the Work would not finish going to all the cities of Israel before the end would come. Unger's commentary mentions, "The scope of Mt. 10:16-23 goes beyond the kingdom ministry of the 12 and is prophetic of the preaching of the Jewish [Israelite] remnant in the dark persecution-ridden days of the Great Tribulation preceding the second advent, when the gospel of the kingdom will again be proclaimed" (p. 476). Christ added in this regard that the gospel will be preached in all the world and then the end would come (Mt. 24:14). The end, or God's intervention in world affairs, will come suddenly, while the gospel is still being sent out.

Jesus also mentioned that how He had been treated, so will it be for many of His disciples. He said, "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 [Satan], 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 (Mt. 10:24-27). All the lies against God's truths will one day be known, and all the slander against God's servants. God's true church is small and persecuted, but one day, it will be acknowledged it was the authentic one. We must learn to be patient in this regard.

Jesus also reveals another great truth. He says, "And do not fear him 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" (Mt. 10:28). Here Christ refutes the notion that we have an immortal soul, for it can be destroyed. The word "soul" is *psuche* in Gk. and *nephesh* in Hebrew, that means the life-giving essence of the body. God can destroy one's life in *Gehenna*, which is symbolic of the lake of fire and the second death (see Rev. 20:14-15). Above all, we should fear God the Father and God the Son, who can destroy us completely, while men can only destroy our "first" life but do not our "second" one. *The Anchor Bible* says about the "soul": "The term *nephesh* [and its equivalent in Gk, *psuche*] has various meanings, among them breath, life, appetite, emotions, and the whole person. The idea that the soul is a different entity than the physical body is not biblical."

Jesus also mentions we would be protected when persecuted. He says, "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 on your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows" (Mt. 10:29-31).

Despite the trials, God assures us He is in control. He has the very hairs on our head counted, something even a mother's greatest love for the child does not do. We have on the average about 120,000 hairs on our head—until they begin to fall out. We should have confidence that God knows how to take care of us and what is best for us.

Christ ends chapter 10 by warning us that to deny Him after conversion means He will deny us at judgment time. Sometimes this means having to go against the will of the people we love. Remember, we should remain faithful to the end.