

Disciples and the Mission

Bob Young

Text: Matthew 10

Introduction

Matthew is literary masterpiece, Jewish background, OT quotes, thematic consistency, a servant king.

Literary factors:

- The presence of Jesus [Matt. 1:23, 28:18-20]
- Two divisions [Matt. 4:17, 16:21]
- Theme of Part I [Matt. 4:23, teaching/preaching/healing]

Matthew has five discourses which are used alternately with the narrative sections of the book.

#1—Mountain Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, with disciples present
- Topic: Introduction to the Kingdom of Heaven [ye have heard it said, contrasts]
- Next: Crowds marvel, Jesus goes teaching/preaching/healing, with result in 9:35-38

#2—Mission Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples, Jesus enlists his followers in his mission
- Topic: Followers in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is increasing opposition from Pharisees

#3—Parables Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, with explanations to disciples
- Topic: The Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is offense (13:57)

#4—Relationship Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples
- Topic: Principles in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Result is Pharisees' testing Jesus

#5—Judgment Discourse

- Listeners: written to all
- Topic: Outcomes in the Kingdom of Heaven
- Next: Jesus' crucifixion

Introduction to Matthew 10

This chapter is not easy to outline, there are few internal markers. Can make some basic observations. Jesus establishes his authority. Then he calls the twelve to give them authority (10:1). Jesus intends to share his authority with his followers.

Intense human need moved Jesus to this decision (see 9:35-38). He personally could not meet all of the needs. He needed help with the task; he had to share the task. When more workers are needed in the harvest, Jesus has the power to send forth those workers.

How exciting to be commissioned! One wonders if the thrill and pride dampened as Jesus explained the lifestyle of those who were given this kind of task and power and authority. Not with pomp and luxury, but as servants. Not with coercive power (a recurring theme in Matthew, cf. Herod). Jesus is a servant king and his followers must be servant followers. Some will receive this message, some will reject it. Authority is granted for the purpose of serving.

Here is a manifesto of Jesus' principles, the nature of discipleship, the people of the kingdom, Kingdom followers. Jesus' first-century disciples are a paradigm for the readers, so all are Jesus' contemporaries participating in Jesus' mission. This is a text, then, that addresses the church as a missionary church.

The Sending of Disciples to Participate in the Mission

Note the chiasmic structure suggested in the following outline:

The “how” of discipleship.... (note how hard these things are)

Depending on God (5-11)

Giving others freedom to accept or reject the Lord (12-15)

Expecting and enduring persecution (16-23)

➔ Looking to Jesus as their example, expecting the same as he received (24-25)

Remembering their great value (26-33)

Expecting conflict (34-39)

Helping others to be rewarded (40-42)

The Empowerment/Commission of the Disciples, 5-15ff

With regard to the honor possessions, go forth dependent

With regard to the honor of power, go forth without coercion

With regard to the honor of praise, go forth expecting opposition and persecution

[Note textually significant words: Worthy (11), peace (13), receive (14)]

At the risk of seeming simplistic, Jesus asked them to do the impossible, to dare the impractical, and to deliver the impartial!

The Encouragement of the Disciples, 16-23

Jesus was a realist, and in sending out his apostles, he prepared them: sheep among wolves, with a certain attitude, expecting problems, but depending on God.

The Essence of Discipleship, 24-25

➔ **The “Center”:** Like Teacher, Like Master (10:24-25)

Expect what Jesus got, don't expect to be treated better....

Expect hostility, 16-20; expect rejection, 20-23, 34-38; Expect to win, 26-33

The Expectations of Discipleship, 26-42

➔ Disciples sent because of their value in God's sight, without fear (opposite = faith?), 26-33

➔ Sent because of their worth (suitability, loyalty), without peace [no peace, 34]. Instead of peace there is division and conflict, [worthy, 37-39]; such loyalty brings the great paradox of Christianity

➔ Sent for a purpose, privileged position [receive, 40-42, || ch. 18]. If the debit side of discipleship is in view in this chapter, there is a credit—the privilege of being recognized as Jesus' representative.

- Received, as one entrusted to do Jesus' work.
- Rewarded, as righteous, in the name of, in his capacity as...
- Recognized as representatives, hospitality was taken for granted in that day, deserving no reward, not philanthropy but simply receiving someone because he is a disciple. “Little ones” (cf. ch. 18). The disciple is in the privileged position of representing Jesus who represents God, and whose reception is the test of one's attitude toward God, leading either to reward or loss. Here is comfort for those who find the world against them because they belong to Jesus.

There is little here about the content of the preaching (preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand), the focus is almost exclusively on behavior and destiny. Discipleship is about behavior (dependence, poverty, defenseless...). Matthew addresses behavior and destiny because disciples are images of Jesus himself: discipleship means conforming to the life of Christ and following his model. The defining property of Christ-likeness is not words, but deeds.

To be the church means to assume the commission and authority of Jesus, to live as he did, to suffer as he did; to be the church means discipleship.