

# Matthew 10

by John Nelson Darby

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*Jesus commissions His twelve disciples to announce the nearness of the kingdom to Israel and to exercise the power they have received, including casting out devils and healing the sick.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 95:7-8, Matthew 10, Luke 22:35-37, Hebrews 6:5

**Topics:** "Mission", "Faithfulness in Persecution"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the mission of Jesus as He sends His twelve disciples to the lost sheep of Israel, empowering them to heal and cast out demons. He highlights the urgency of their task amidst the iniquity of the people, warning them of the opposition they would face, including persecution and familial division. The disciples are reminded to rely on God for their needs and to boldly proclaim the message of the kingdom, knowing that their faithfulness would be rewarded. Darby underscores the importance of recognizing Jesus as Emmanuel and the consequences of rejecting His messengers. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to Christ above all else, assuring that even small acts of kindness towards His followers will not go unnoticed.

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## Transcript

So long as God gives Him access to the people, He continues His labour of love. Nevertheless, He was conscious of the iniquity that governed the people, although He did not seek His own glory. Having exhorted His disciples to pray that labourers might be sent into the harvest, He begins (chap. 10) to act in accordance with that desire. He calls His twelve disciples, He gives them power to cast out devils and to heal the sick, and He sends them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We see, in this mission, how much the ways of God with Israel form the subject of this Gospel. They were to announce to that people, and to them exclusively, the nearness of the kingdom, exercising at the same time the power they had received: a striking testimony to Him who was come, and who could not only work miracles Himself, but confer power on others to do so likewise. He gave them authority over evil spirits for this purpose. It is this which characterises the kingdom-man healed of all sickness and the devil cast out Accordingly, in Hebrews 6, miracles are called "the powers of the world to come." [See Footnote #27]

They were also, with respect to their need, to depend entirely on Him who sent them. Emmanuel was there. If miracles were a proof to the world of their Master's power, the fact that they lacked nothing should be so to their own hearts The ordinance was abrogated during that period of their ministry which followed the departure of Jesus from this world (Luke 22:35-37). That which He here (Matthew 10) commands His

disciples appertains to His presence as Messiah, as Jehovah Himself, on the earth. Therefore the reception of His messengers, or their rejection, decided the fate of those to whom they were sent. In rejecting them they rejected the Lord Emmanuel, God with His people. [See Footnote #28] But, in fact, He sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They would need the wisdom of serpents, and were to exhibit the harmlessness of doves (rare union of virtues, found only in those who, by the Spirit of the Lord, are wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil).

If they did not beware of men (sad testimony as to these), they would but suffer; but when scourged and brought before councils and governors and kings, all this should become a testimony unto them—a divine means of presenting the gospel of the kingdom to kings and princes, without altering its character or accommodating it to the world, or mixing up the Lord's people with its usages and its false greatness. Moreover circumstances like these made their testimony much more conspicuous than association with the great ones of the earth would have done.

And, to accomplish this, they should receive such power and guidance from the Spirit of their Father as would cause the words they spoke to be not their own words, but His who inspired them. Here, again, their relation with their Father, which so distinctly characterises the sermon on the Mount, is made the basis of their capacity for the service they had to perform. We must remember that this testimony was addressed to Israel only; only that, Israel being under the yoke of the Gentiles since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the testimony would reach their rulers.

But this testimony would excite an opposition that should break all family ties, and awaken a hatred that would not spare the life of those who had been the most beloved. He who in spite of all this should endure to the end should be saved. Nevertheless the case was urgent. They were not to resist, but if the opposition took the form of persecution, they were to flee and preach the Gospel elsewhere, for before they had gone over the cities of Israel the Son of man should come. [See Footnote #29] They were to proclaim the kingdom. Jehovah, Emmanuel, was there, in the midst of His people, and the heads of the people had called the master of the house Beelzebub. This had not stopped His testimony, but it very strongly characterised the circumstances in which this testimony was to be rendered. He sent them forth, warning them of this state of things, to maintain this final testimony among His beloved people as long as possible. This took place at that time, and it is possible, if circumstances permit, to carry it on until the Son of man comes to execute judgment. Then the master of the house will have risen up to shut the door. The "to-day" of Psalms 95 will be over. Israel in possession of their cities being the object of this testimony, it is necessarily suspended when they are no longer in their land. The testimony to the future kingdom given in Israel by the apostles after the Lord's death, is an accomplishment of this mission, so far as this testimony was rendered in the land of Israel; for the kingdom might be proclaimed as to be established while Emmanuel was on the earth; or this might be by Christ's returning from heaven as announced by Peter in Acts 3. And this might take place if Israel were in the land, even until Christ should return. Thus the testimony may be resumed in Israel, whenever they are again in their land and the requisite spiritual power is sent forth by God.

Meanwhile, the disciples were to share in Christ's own position. If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more they of His household. But they were not to fear. It was the necessary portion of those who were for God in the midst of the people. But there was nothing hid that should not be revealed. They themselves were to hold nothing back, but were to proclaim on the housetops all that they had been taught; for everything should be brought into the light; their faithfulness to God in this respect, as well as all other things. This, while it met the secret plottings of their enemies, was itself to characterise the ways

of the disciples. God, who is light, and sees in darkness as in light, would bring all out into the light, but they were to do this morally now. Therefore were they to fear nothing while performing this work, unless it were God Himself, the righteous Judge at the last day. Moreover the hairs of their heads were numbered. They were precious to their Father, who took notice of even a sparrow's death. This could not happen without Him who was their Father.

Finally, they were to be thoroughly imbued with the conviction that the Lord was not come to send peace on the earth; no, it should be division, even in the bosom of families. But Christ was to be more precious than father or mother, and even than a man's own life. He who would save his life at the expense of his testimony to Christ should lose it; he who would lose it for the sake of Christ should gain it. He also who should receive this testimony, in the person of the disciples, received Christ, and, in Christ, Him that sent Him. God, therefore, being thus acknowledged in the person of His witnesses on earth, would bestow, on whoever received the latter, a reward according to the testimony rendered. In thus acknowledging the testimony of the rejected Lord, were it only by a cup of cold water, he who gave it should not lose his reward. In an opposing world, he who believes the testimony of God, and receives (in spite of the world) the man who bears this testimony, really confesses God, as well as His servant. It is all that we can do. The rejection of Christ made Him a test, a touchstone.

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#### Footnotes for Matthew 10

27: For then Satan will be bound and man delivered by the power of Christ. And there were partial deliverances of the kind.

28: There is a division of the Lord's discourse at verse 15. Up to that it is the then present mission. From verse 16 we have more general reflections on their mission, looked at as a whole in the midst of Israel on to the end. Evidently it goes beyond their then present mission and supposes the coming of the Holy Ghost. The mission by which the church is called as such is a distinct thing. This applies only to Israel they were forbidden to go to Gentiles. This necessarily closed with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, but it is to be renewed at the end, till the Son of man be come. There was a testimony to the Gentiles only, as brought before them as judges, as Paul was, and that part of his history even on to Rome in Acts, was amidst Jews. The latter part, from verse 16, has less to do with the gospel of the kingdom.

29: Observe here the expression "Son of man." This is the character in which (according to Dan. 7) the Lord will come, in a power and glory much greater than that of His manifestation as Messiah, the Son of David, and which will be displayed in a much wider sphere. As the Son of man, He is the heir of all that God destines for man (see Heb. 2: 6-8, and 1 Cor. 15:27). He must, in consequence, seeing what man's condition is, suffer in order to possess this inheritance. He was there as the Messiah, but He must be received in His true character, Emmanuel; and the Jews must thus be tested morally. He will not have the kingdom on carnal principles. Rejected as Messiah, as Emmanuel, He postpones the period of those events which will close the ministry of His disciples with respect to Israel, unto His coming as the Son of man. Meantime God has brought out other things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, the true glory of Jesus the Son of God, His heavenly glory as man and the church united to Him in heaven. The Judgment of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the nation, have suspended the ministry which had begun at the moment of which the evangelist here speaks. That which has filled up the interval since then

is not the subject here of the Lord's discourse, which refers solely to the ministry that had the Jews for its object. The counsels of God with respect to the church, in connection with the glory of Jesus at the right hand of God, we shall find spoken of elsewhere. Luke will give us in more detail that which concerns the Son of man In Matthew the Holy Ghost occupies us with the rejection of Emmanuel.

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