

Matthew 10:5-10

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Jesus instructs His disciples in what they are supposed to do when they go throughout the land proclaiming the kingdom, healing, and casting out demons. He tells them places to avoid and what resources they should and should not take with them.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 6:7-9 and Luke 9:1-3.

A parallel gospel account of these instructions on separate occasion is found in Luke 10:1, 4.

It was *these twelve* disciples named in verses 1-4 that *Jesus sent out to preach* the Gospel and *heal* the infirm. Matthew writes that before *Jesus sent them out*, He gave *them* instructions.

What follows is Matthew's second extended account of Jesus's words, called "discourses." It is sometimes called "The Missionary Discourse" and it goes from Matthew 10:5-10:42. The first discourse was "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:3-7:27). Matthew will include three more discourses: "The Parabolic Discourse" (Matthew 13:1-35); "The Discourse on the Church" (Matthew 18); and "The Olivet Discourse" (Matthew 24-25).

Jesus told the twelve "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles..." Gentiles were non-Jewish people. They were people who were not a part of God's covenant agreement with *Israel*. That covenant is summarized by the Ten Commandments, where God commanded Israel to live in social harmony, serving rather than exploiting one another. What *Jesus* meant by *do not go in the way of these Gentiles* was for *the twelve* to not follow *the way* or roads to the territories and regions where *Gentiles* lived. In the broader scheme this would make Syria to the north and the Decapolis (a region with ten Greek/Roman cities) to the East off limits. But the command "me aperchomai" is literally "do not depart" the way, or path, which indicates that Jesus did not want the twelve stopping to *preach the kingdom* in the Roman towns and villages, such as Tiberias or Caesarea scattered throughout Galilee and Judea.

Jesus added, *and do not enter any city of the Samaritans*. Samaria was located between the Jewish regions of Judea to its south and Galilee to its north. To Samaria's east and west were the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, respectively. Samaritans were the mixed descendants of the Syrians and the fallen Northern Kingdom of Israel. Assyria conquered Israel in 722 B.C. Jews and Samaritans disliked one another. *Jesus* uses a Samaritan in one of His parables to drive home the point that the command to love our neighbor as ourselves applies to all people, even those we do not like (Luke 10:25-37). On another occasion a Samaritan woman tells Jesus that He was violating the cultural norms of speaking to her, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (John 4:9).

Jesus's instructions indicate that this mission was a time for *the twelve* to share the gospel with Jews.

Jesus commands *the twelve* to avoid the byways of *the Gentiles* and *any city of the Samaritans* because the good news and message of *the kingdom* must first be delivered to the covenant people who are *the house of Israel*. There will come a time after *Jesus* has completed His mission, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them, that *Jesus* foretells that these same disciples “shall be My witness both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). But that time is not yet. First the message that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* is to be proclaimed to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. God is honoring His covenant to Israel first, before extending His offer to everyone else. It was to their fellow countrymen that the twelve were to *go to*.

The house of Israel refers to the people and nation who have descended from *Israel* and his *twelve* sons. It is a direct reference to the covenant God first made with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15) and reaffirmed with *Israel* (Genesis 35:9-15) and later through Moses to all the people (Exodus 20). *Jesus* describes *the house of Israel* as *lost sheep*. This is a continuation of what He observed earlier in Matthew 9:36, “Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like *sheep* without a shepherd.” *Sheep* were defenseless animals. If they wandered away from the herd and became *lost*, they would almost certainly die. In using this analogy *Jesus* is expressing that *the house of Israel* has wandered away from the blessings of God’s covenant and has *lost* sight of its calling and destiny. Without someone to remind or rescue them, they will die, having failed to accomplish, participate, and inherit the great things God intended for them.

And as you go, Jesus instructed, *preach*. The *twelve* were to *preach as* they went. There was no set destination or prescheduled events. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, they were to proclaim to everyone in *the house of Israel*, the same message *Jesus* and John the Baptizer had been preaching—*the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 9:35). Their preaching probably sounded a lot like the directives found in the Sermon on the Mount.

In addition to preaching, *Jesus* empowered and commanded *these twelve* to miraculously *heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons*. They were given a similar power to what *Jesus* Himself had. None of the gospels detail particular accounts of the disciples successfully performing miracles of healing or exercising demons. But Mark 6:12-13 and Luke 10:17 affirm that they did. (Acts provides several instances where they do, but these take place after *Jesus* has ascended and the Holy Spirit comes upon them.) They were to do miracles, including raising *the dead*, and not receive any payment for doing so.

Jesus tells them how to use this miraculous power: *Freely you received, freely give*. They are not to take advantage of the authority God gave them. They are not to abuse this gift of power to manipulate or control others. As it was *freely received*, so they are to *freely give* it for the blessing of others. They are not to charge, they are to freely give these blessings. This was and is a remarkable difference between the kingdoms of earth and *the kingdom of heaven*. Those who have power among the kingdoms of earth use it selfishly for their own gain. They withhold goods from others until they get what they want from them. They use their power to extort and manipulate. In *the kingdom of heaven*, those in power use their authority to meet the needs of others and serve them irrespective of what earthly gain they may get or lose by it. Likewise, the gift of eternal life is freely given to all who will receive it (Romans 5:15-18).

Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, Jesus commands them. They are not to become transactional with their power. They are not to seek earthly treasures from using their miraculous powers to heal. The phrase for your money belts coupled with Jesus's explanation, for the worker is worthy of his support, suggest that the twelve could receive just enough compensation to meet their daily needs for food and shelter, but not so much that they would need money belts or a bag to store their earthly treasures on their journey.

They were also not to bring a bag for their journey, because they were to travel light. They did not even need two coats, or an extra pair of sandals, or an extra staff. The more possessions they took with them, the more of a hindrance to proclaiming the kingdom it would be for them. Jesus is training the twelve to walk by faith, and to be mission-focused. He is training them for a time when He will leave earth and entrust the work of spreading the gospel of the kingdom. They are to seek treasure in heaven, rather than earthly treasure.

Biblical Text

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go 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, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.