



Lesson 4

Chapter 10: The Mission of the Twelve Apostles

The Twelve Apostles (10:1-4)

Many men and women followed Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. From them he chose twelve men who would be particularly close to him and who would have special work to do. They are first called 'disciples' (Matt. 5:1) meaning 'learners' or 'pupils' because when Jesus called them to follow him they were his pupils. Jesus had many disciples but from among them he chose these 12 for a special task.

These men are now called 'apostles' meaning, 'messenger' or 'he who is sent' (Matt. 10:1).

Jesus chose men from various backgrounds. He sent them out to preach the Gospel and gave them power to perform miracles; they could even raise the dead.

We know from the Gospel records that sometimes there were disagreements and quarrels among them. Jesus took time to teach them that this was wrong and that they should be united by the Gospel message. This is a lesson for us today, it does not matter what colour our skin is, what tribe we belong to, whether we are male or female, we are all treated the same by God and we should treat everyone similarly.

"In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28)

Instructions for Preaching (10:5-13)

As they set out on their first preaching mission Jesus' instructions to the Apostles were clear.

- They were to preach to the Jews (the 'lost sheep of Israel', verse 6).
- They were to preach the message about the coming Kingdom of God (verse 7).
- Their preaching was to be accompanied by miracles of healing (verse 8).
- They were to give freely; they could accept hospitality but not make money out of preaching and healing.
- They would meet opposition and persecution, but God would help them.
- They would be rewarded if they remained faithful.

The Gospel message the Apostles were to teach was "*the Kingdom of heaven is at hand (near)*". We know that God's great purpose is to establish His kingdom again on this earth, but it is now about 2,000 years since the Apostles were instructed to teach that the kingdom is near.

In Old Testament times there was a Kingdom of God on earth. It was the Kingdom of Israel, centred on Jerusalem. The citizens of this kingdom were the Jews, God's people, living in the land He had given them. But because of the faithlessness of His people, God brought His kingdom on earth to an end. Six hundred years before Jesus was born the last king of Israel was removed by an invading army. From that time onwards, God's people have never had a king to rule over them. In the time of Jesus the Romans ruled over the Jewish people, so how was the Kingdom of Heaven near to them?

The Bible tells us how Jesus fulfilled his Father's purpose perfectly. He showed God's character to all around him by the way he lived and spoke. He showed them a very different way of living from the example given by their religious leaders. So the future king of the world was there with them. By using the

The Kingdom of Israel

When Jesus returns it will be this kingdom that will be restored and he will extend it so eventually it will include the whole earth. The Apostles understood this after the resurrection of Jesus and they asked him:

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

The Kingdom of Heaven is another name for this Kingdom of God that will be established on earth when Jesus returns.





miraculous powers of the kingdom to come and by his behaviour Jesus showed people what it would be like in the kingdom. In this sense the kingdom of heaven was indeed near to the Jews at that time. By accepting the Apostles' preaching, men and women could accept Jesus as king of their lives there and then, even though many things must happen before he would reign as king over the world from Jerusalem

We too should accept the Lord Jesus as king in our lives now so that we will be ready for his return.

Warning of Persecution (10:16-28)

When Jesus sent out the Apostles to preach he knew it would not be easy for them so he warned them that their best behaviour was needed (*"be innocent as doves"*). He listed ways in which they might be persecuted by their own countrymen. A similar message was given later in his ministry (Luke 21:12-18) showing that these persecutions would continue after his death.

Despite the powerful witness of the miracles Jesus performed and the authority of his teaching, most Jews rejected his message. They accused him (verse 25) of being the master of the house of a pagan god, Beelzebub and so Jesus warned them. He said:

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell... but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."
(Matthew 10:28 & 33)

The Apostles were told not to fear those who were trying to kill them because their future would be safe with God. They were however to fear God who can *"destroy both the soul and the body in hell (Gehenna)"*. Gehenna was the place outside Jerusalem where rubbish and dead animals were completely burnt up. It represents complete destruction. People may kill us but they cannot destroy our hope of eternal life. Only God can provide immortal life, through His Son, and so only He can withhold it.

The word 'soul' means 'life'

When a person dies his life is taken from him and he ceases to exist. The soul dies. However, this life can be given back to him at the resurrection of the dead.

"Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4)

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going." (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

God's Care for Us

Although Jesus warned those who rejected him, he told those who would accept him of his great care for them whatever happened in their lives.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven," (Matt.10:29-32)

Our commitment (10:34-42)

Jesus taught that our commitment to him must be total if we choose to be his disciples. He warned his Apostles that the Gospel message would divide families between those who accept the Gospel call and those who rejected it. The disciple that loses his life for the Gospel's sake will receive life in the kingdom.





Chapter 11: Jesus and John the Baptist

John the Baptist's Messengers (11:1-6)

King Herod arrested and imprisoned John the Baptist whom we met in chapter 3. John then sent his followers to ask Jesus if he really was the promised Messiah. Jesus told them to tell John what they had seen and heard. No-one could perform such miracles or preach like this unless they really were the Messiah.

To answer the question *"Are you the one who is to come?"* Jesus showed them that his work fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah and the coming Kingdom of God that we find in Isaiah. Compare the reply of Jesus to the disciples of John with these words from Isaiah 35 and 61.

Jesus' reply includes these words:	Jesus' words are taken from these passages	
<p>Matthew 11:5-6</p> <p>"The <u>blind receive their sight</u> and <u>the lame walk</u>, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and <u>the poor have good news preached to them</u>. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."</p>	<p>Isaiah 35:5-6</p> <p>"Then the <u>eyes of the blind shall be opened</u>, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the <u>lame man leap like a deer</u>, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;"</p>	<p>Isaiah 61:1</p> <p>"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me <u>to bring good news to the poor</u>; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;"</p>

John was executed (read Matt. 14:3-12). When Jesus returns John will be resurrected and given immortal life, a hope that all disciples share. Isaiah 35 and 61 tell us of both the release from sin that Jesus brought and the even greater blessings he will bring with him at his return.

In his reply Jesus also included *"the poor have the good news preached to them"*. Look at Luke 4:16-21 to see how Jesus had previously applied this prophecy to himself.

John the Baptist's Role (11:7-15)

John had completed the work foretold by the prophet (read Isaiah 40:3). He had been *"the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord"* (Matt. 3:3). John knew that his work was at an end and he wanted his disciples now to follow Jesus. *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (read John 3:30).

So Jesus paid tribute to the work of John, the last and greatest of a line of prophets.

In the last chapter of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:5) there is a prophecy that Elijah (one of the early Old Testament prophets), will reappear before God's day of judgement to be a messenger like that of John the Baptist. John had prepared the way for the coming of Jesus, just as Elijah had prepared the way for Elisha (a prophet who came after Elijah and completed his work).

Sadly, the people of Israel did not accept either the message of John or the ministry of Jesus but put Jesus to death. God's judgements were poured out on them when the Romans attacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and later in A.D. 135 when it was *"ploughed as a field"*, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 3:12.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: MESSIAH

MESSIAH is a Hebrew word meaning 'anointed' or 'king'. In Greek the same word is translated 'Christ'. Matthew 1.21 tells us 'Jesus' means 'Saviour' so Jesus Christ means 'The Saviour, the (future) King'.





John and Jesus – Both Righteous but Outwardly Different (11:16-19)

The Jews had rejected John, claiming that *“he has a demon”*, or he was mad. They rejected Jesus as well, despite his very different way of life. Notice that people said that John had a demon because his behaviour and appearance were very unusual; he did not spend his time socialising and he did not drink alcohol (see Luke 1:15). John lived a life apart from other people in order to focus on the work God had called him to do.

The same people also rejected Jesus and said that he too had a demon (John 7:20; 8:48-52). But Jesus came to save the lost sheep of Israel (see Matt. 10:6) and so he mixed with the people and socialised with them in order to preach to them. Yet his accusers used this openness as an opportunity to accuse him of gluttony, drunkenness and mixing with those who were most despised by society (see Matt. 9:10).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: WISDOM

Godly wisdom is pictured in the Old Testament as a righteous woman who invites people to her house (Proverbs 9:1-12). Folly is represented by a foolish woman who encourages people to do wrong things (Proverbs 9:13-18). These are examples of personification, where something without life is described as if it were a person.

John and Jesus are ‘children of wisdom’ - children of the righteous woman; both of them invited people to come and listen to the message they preached. God, in His wisdom, planned that John would be like the prophet Elijah in appearance and way of life, but He planned that His Son would be different.

Jews who knew the Old Testament would recognise that Elijah gave way to a greater prophet, Elisha, who performed many miracles, some of them pointing forward to the work of Jesus. For example, Elisha healed a leper and raised the dead (2 Kings 4, 5). This would help them to recognise that Jesus was the Son of God.

People who Ignored God's Power (11:20-24)

It must have been wonderful to see the amazing miracles Jesus performed, and witness the joy of those that he healed! Only by God's Holy Spirit could such miracles be performed yet some who saw the marvellous power of God at work refused to accept Jesus. The people from Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, rejected the witness of the power of the miracles performed and dismissed the call to repentance and the prospect of entrance to the Kingdom of God at Jesus' return.

Verse 21 tells us that the people of Tyre and Sidon, who were Gentiles (non-Jews), did not have the same opportunity to see the miraculous works of Jesus and to hear his teaching. The Jews were privileged to be God's chosen people. By turning their backs on God's offer of salvation they will not go unpunished in the day of God's Judgements.

God is calling us through His Word, the Bible. While we have the opportunity, we must not neglect the call to repentance and the offer of deliverance from sin and death.

People who Accepted Jesus (11:25-30)

In contrast to the wickedness of those who rejected his teaching, the Lord thanked his Father for his close disciples and other people who were not blind to his message.

"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;"
(Matthew 11:25)

Jesus here describes his disciples as little children meaning those who have a child like trust in him.

God calls people to salvation, and here Jesus calls us by asking us to take his yoke. A yoke enabled a pair of oxen to bear the load and work together. To work in harmony with Jesus we must develop characters that are meek (gentle) and lowly (humble). Jesus promises that, if we will work with him, he will share our burdens, give us rest now from our sins and complete rest in the kingdom to come at his return to the earth.





Chapter 12: God's Chosen Servant

Eating from the Cornfield on the Sabbath (12:1-14)

Chapter 12 opens with a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees saw the disciples picking some ears of corn from a field and eating them. This was not stealing, the Law of Moses allowed Jews to take corn in this way (Deuteronomy 23:25). However, the Pharisees claimed that by doing it on the Sabbath day the disciples were breaking the commandment which forbade working on the Sabbath. They were missing the real point about it. God gave the law about resting on the Sabbath day so that on it Israel could spend time worshipping God and remembering the way in which He had delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

“But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work...

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day”.

(Deuteronomy 5:14-15)

Jesus told to them, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* (Mark 2:27). Jesus' work on the Sabbath is recorded to teach us that the work of the Lord should be a continuous activity, seven days a week.

Lessons for Us

Twice in this chapter Jesus challenges the Pharisees about their understanding of God's purpose. He says to them *“have you not read...?”* He points out that, unlike themselves, King David, and later the priests, understood that serving God was something to be done on every day of the week, not just on the Sabbath.

Our commitment to the Lord must be part of our everyday lives, not just something for Sunday. We must remember always the sacrifice he made to save us (read Matt. 26:26-30).

The Pharisees even thought that healing on the Sabbath was a form of work and therefore forbidden! So when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand (verses 9-14) they thought Jesus was a threat to their authority and met to plot how they could kill him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were devout Jews who attempted to keep strictly to the Law given by God through Moses. They added to the Law a great many extra rules – their traditions – and became very concerned with obeying these man-made laws. In doing this they lost the true spirit of God's Law. In fact some of their traditions went totally against the original purpose of the Law itself. Many were proud and looked down on their fellow Jews who did not keep their traditions.

Jesus condemned their hypocrisy – while claiming to be faithful servants of God they did not truly obey God; they were not humble, compassionate and merciful in the way they treated people. There were exceptions, like Joseph and Nicodemus who took care of Jesus' body after his death.

A Prophecy about Jesus (12:15-21)

Matthew quotes the words of Isaiah which show Jesus as the chosen Servant of God (Isaiah 42:15-21).

- The Servant would be gentle and would submit to suffering and unjust treatment.
- He would not strive but would be gentle with all who seek to learn God's ways.
- He would also triumph over sin and gain the victory on God's behalf.
- He would bring judgements on all the nations of the world. They would learn God's Laws and trust Him. This is part of the future work of Jesus when he returns to the earth (Matt. 12:21).





The theme of the Servant is an important one in Isaiah's prophecy. Other Servant prophecies include Isaiah 49 which speaks of Jesus as a light to all nations and not just the Jews, and Isaiah 52:13 – 53:1-12, a wonderful prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus.

God's Power and Beelzebul (12:22-30)

Jesus healed a blind and dumb man whom the Jews believed was possessed with a demon. Beelzebul was thought to be a chief demon. Whether or not the Pharisees really believed in Beelzebul, they accused Jesus of using Beelzebul's power in order to stop others believing in him. Jesus showed how foolish this was because if Beelzebul had caused this man's problems then Jesus could not be working with Beelzebul to heal the man. Jesus pointed out that there is no benefit in a kingdom (like the supposed wicked power and activities of Beelzebul) being divided against itself. Similarly, if an enemy fights against himself, he cannot win.

As Lesson 29 of the 40 Lesson Course shows, the word 'satan' simply means an opponent or enemy, and is here used by Jesus to show how wrong they were to argue that he was evil when he was actually fighting evil:

BEELZEBUL/BAAL-ZEBUB: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Baal-zebub occurs in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 1:2 where we can see that it refers to a false god:

"Now Ahaziah (*a Jewish king*) fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, 'Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.'"

The name of this god was actually Baalzebul, meaning 'lord of the house' or 'master of the house'. It is likely that the people of Israel had taken the original name of this Philistine god, changed the last letter, and produced this name which can be translated as 'Lord of the flies' because 'zebul' is Hebrew for dung or filth.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31, 32)

Since Jesus used God's Holy Spirit to heal people it was very wrong to say that he used the power of Beelzebul. Jesus said they were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and could not be forgiven. God is very forgiving and merciful but these Jewish leaders hated Jesus and were prepared to say that his extraordinary power working for the good of people was from an evil source. In this way they deliberately spoke evil of the Holy Spirit, God's power. This was unforgivable.

The Sign of the Prophet Jonah (12:38-41)

Even though Jesus had performed amazing miracles they still asked him for a sign! The greatest sign of all – the resurrection of Jesus – would be given to show that Jesus really is the Son of God, but the leaders of the Jews would reject him.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah was swallowed by a great sea creature and remained in it for three days and nights before God rescued him. Afterwards he went and preached the need for repentance to Gentiles at Nineveh who initially listened but then turned away from God and were destroyed.

This event was a type; it pointed forward to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was in the tomb for three days and nights before God raised him from the dead. The Jews initially accepted his teaching but turned against him and would be almost destroyed by the Roman invasion of their land in AD70.

The Relatives of Jesus (12:46-50)

We know from John 7:5 that Jesus' half-brothers – Mary and Joseph's children – did not believe in him during his ministry, although Mary, his mother, remained faithful. Sadly we read that the relatives of Jesus thought he must be mad (Mark 3:21). However, Acts 1:14, written after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, shows us that the fact of his resurrection changed their minds and they became faithful disciples of Jesus.



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 10

- 1 What work did Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John all do before they followed Jesus? (4:18-22)

- 2 What does the word 'soul' mean?

- 3b Do people have a soul (or spirit) which continues to live after they die?

- 3c Verse 28 shows that the soul is not immortal. Who can destroy it?

- 3c What is meant by destroying "the body in hell (Gehenna)"?

Questions on Chapter 11

- 1 John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus asking whether he was the One promised by God. In his answer Jesus spoke about the miracles he had performed. Why?

In the time of Jesus when a person suffered from some strange illness that could not be explained, people said that he had a demon

2a Why did people say that John the Baptist had a demon?

2b What reason did they give for also rejecting Jesus?

3 What punishment did God bring on the people of Sodom? (See Genesis chapter 19)

4 God's truth is hidden from those who think they are wise and clever. If we want God to show His truth to us, what sort of people should we be?

Questions on Chapter 12

1a Why were the Jews required to keep the Sabbath Day?

1b Why were the Priests exempt from keeping the Sabbath Day?

1c What lessons can we learn from the example of the Priests not required to keep the Sabbath Day?

2 Why should we think carefully before we speak (verse 36)?

3 What was meant by the sign of the prophet Jonah?