

# The Twelve – Israel for an Arriving Kingdom

Thomas Robinson, *Learning at Jesus' Side*, 8, July 22, 2012

## Matthew 10:1-16

<sup>1</sup> And he called to him his **twelve disciples** and **gave** them **authority** over **unclean spirits**, to **cast them out**, and to **heal** every **disease** and every **affliction**.

<sup>2</sup> The names of the **twelve apostles** are these: [Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:13-16; Act 1:13]

first, **Simon**, who is called **Peter**, and **Andrew** his brother;

**James** the son of Zebedee, and **John** his brother;

<sup>3</sup> **Philip** and **Bartholomew**;

**Thomas** and **Matthew** the tax collector;

**James** the son of Alphaeus, and **Thaddaeus**;

<sup>4</sup> **Simon** the Zealot (Cananaean), and **Judas Iscariot**, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> **These twelve Jesus sent out**, instructing them, “*Go nowhere among the **Gentiles** and enter no town of the **Samaritans**,* <sup>6</sup> *but go rather to **the lost sheep of the house of Israel**.*”

<sup>7</sup> *And proclaim as you go, saying, “**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”*

<sup>8</sup> ***Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.***

<sup>9</sup> *Acquire no **gold** or **silver** or **copper** for your belts, <sup>10</sup> **no bag** for your journey, or **two tunics** or **sandals** or a **staff**, for **the laborer deserves his food**.*

<sup>11</sup> *And whatever **town** or **village** you enter, find out **who is worthy** in it and stay there until you depart. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the house, **greet it**. <sup>13</sup> And if the house is worthy, **let your peace come upon it**, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

<sup>14</sup> *And **if anyone will not receive you** or **listen to your words**, **shake off the dust** from your feet when you leave that house or town. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of **Sodom and Gomorrah** than for **that town**.*

<sup>16</sup> *Behold, **I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be **wise as serpents** and **innocent as doves**.”*

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## Exodus 24:4

<sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to **the twelve tribes of Israel**.

## Matthew 19:28; 26:20

<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, “*Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on **twelve thrones**, judging the **twelve tribes of Israel**.*”

26:<sup>20</sup> When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with **the Twelve**.

## Revelation 21:12, 14 (Vision of the New Jerusalem)

<sup>12</sup> It had a **great, high wall**, with **twelve gates**, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the **names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel** were inscribed.... <sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had **twelve foundations**, and on them were **the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb**.

## Matthew 28:19

<sup>19</sup> “*Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations** (Gentiles), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....*”

## Luke 22:35-37

<sup>22</sup> And he (Jesus) said to them, “**When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?**” They said, “**Nothing.**” <sup>36</sup> He said to them, “**But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.**” <sup>37</sup> **For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’** [Isa 53:12] *For what is written about me has its fulfillment.*”

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## Calling “The Twelve” – God’s Story Unfolds

Matthew has led us deeply into Jesus’ identity and mission through his teaching (ch. 5-7) and deeds (8-9), helping us understand what it means to be disciples to Jesus. Now he takes us deeper into discipleship by recounting Jesus’ naming and instructing twelve as apostles (*apostolos*, emissary, one sent out). Several are well known; others are known only by name. Fishermen, tax collector, zealot, scribe (?), betrayer – recounted in the shadow of the cross.

The Twelve are sent to Israel not to the Gentiles. (Surprising to us: remember the centurion & the Gadarenes.) Jesus is not introducing a general philosophy or spirituality. He is working out God’s unfolding drama, as ancient promises reach climax and God’s kingdom breaks in. It was important to know where he was in the story. So also for us. Though Pharisees thought Jesus was corrupting Israel, Jesus knew and intended that he was renewing God’s people Israel, calling them to repentance, to trust God and turn from violence that later destroyed many.

“The Twelve” are permanent. Jesus enmeshes his followers with Israel’s 12 tribes in God’s long work, unfolding but never broken off. As Son of Man, Servant of the Lord, Messiah, Jesus embodies the whole people and God’s presence with them. Gentiles are invited into an ongoing narrative.

## Sharing Jesus’ Authority for Life and Renewal

We have seen Jesus’ amazing authority for life, healing, renewal. Now, most remarkably, Jesus is able to give that authority to people – these ordinary twelve. They go not to a secluded community but to the harassed and helpless (9:36), the lost sheep of Israel. They go as part of the sheep (10:16) with a blessing of peace, in the midst of wolves moving to violent conflict.

They go with the message of the inbreaking kingdom – Jesus’ teaching – and with the signs of healing, renewal and the defeat of Satan and death. Nothing is set in stone yet. Change, repentance is possible. The leaders were on the broad road to destruction. But many could turn. Give it all freely! The Message, the signs, the renewal, the change. It’s all God’s gift.

## Trusting Entirely in Jesus’ Gift

To this point the disciples have been carried along by Jesus’ powerful movement. Now they are sent out on their own. They have to make decisions where to go, who to trust, what to say and do.

Jesus insists that they learn to trust God’s work by stripping themselves of all other resources.

They go out with unimaginable gifts to give, but not with money or even sandals. Really!?

They need to know the value of their mission and call others – “worthy” – to value it seriously.

Everything they do needs to help retrain their minds – clear thinking, unmixed purposes.

## Inviting People to Share the Renewal

We don’t know how long the Twelve were sent out. It was clearly a limited mission but very important both for the disciples and the unfolding story. It was preparing people who would be following with Jesus into the final crisis of confrontation. Many hundreds joined (500+ 1Cor 15:6).

It was one moment in the story. But in its clarity and focus, this mission revealed what is always at stake for disciples of Jesus in the world: Trusting Jesus’ message, gifts, healing, authority.