

Appendix
Jesus' Discourse on Discipleship, Including the "Lesser" Commission
Matthew 9:35-10:31

"It seems unlikely that the mission discourse (i.e., chapter 10) is intended [apart from vss. 5-6 and 23] to refer to a unique commission of the past. Rather, it is concerned with fundamental instructions given by Jesus to those who proclaim." (Ulrich Luz.)

"Chapter ten is not simply a missionary discourse: it is a discourse on the reception the disciples will get when sent out to extend Jesus' ministry." (Rollin Gram.)

"Matthew offers an alternative view of disciples: not leaders but little ones in intentional community and mission." (Gram.)

Background in Chapter Nine¹

Summary

³⁵And Jesus was going around all the cities and villages² teaching in their³ synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and every sickness.⁴

Attitude

³⁶But seeing the crowds, he felt compassion⁵ towards them, for they were harassed⁶ and downcast,⁷ like sheep not having a shepherd.⁸

Response

¹ France: "The wording is carefully designed to look both back and forward, and to emphasize the continuity between these two sections of the book" [ministry of Jesus and parallel ministry of the disciples]. Similarly, Schreiner: "together 9:35-38 and 10:1-4 function as a hinge between the passages [chaps 8-9 and chap. 10], introducing readers to the second major discourse" (115 n 28).

² The reference to "all the cities and villages" means that the healings in chapters 8-9, mostly in Capernaum, were only a sampling of a much broader threefold ministry of Jesus: teaching, preaching, and healing.

³ Many take the "their" synagogues to either reflect or anticipate the later "them-versus-us" split between synagogues consisting of traditional Jews and those consisting of Jewish believers in Jesus.

⁴ Compare the almost exact wording at the start of Jesus' ministry: 4:23-25, and his initial response to seeing the crowds in 5:1: teaching his soon-to-be missionaries kingdom ethics! And now, after, modelling the ministry of healing in chaps 8-9, he is poised to commission them for ministry among Israel.

⁵ The word literally entailed a movement of the innards—a 'gut reaction' of sympathy if you will. The word is used only of Jesus (excepting three parables—Mt 18:27; Lk 10:33; 15:20). **The result of Jesus' compassion is an appropriate concrete response.**

⁶ This is the word used when people tell the Capernaum leader to no longer "bother" Jesus because the man's daughter has died.

⁷ "Like sheep bothered by wolves, lying down and unable to help themselves, and having no shepherd to guide and protect them, the people were maligned by the religious leaders, helpless before them, and wandering about with no spiritual guidance. The religious leaders, who should have been their shepherds, were keeping the sheep from following the true Shepherd" (Bible Knowledge Commentary [BNC], p. 40). Similar expressions to "sheep without Shepherd" occur in Num 27:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Jdt 11:19; compare also Zech. 10:2, 1 Kings 22:17.

⁸ Jesus as shepherd is vital to Matthew's understanding of the Messiah. It begins in 2:6 where Jesus the good Davidic shepherd king contrasts with Herod, who exemplifies the sort of bad leadership Jesus implies here in v. 36. "To a first-century Jew, a reference to a ruler coming forth to 'shepherd my people Israel' would have conjured up the eschatological expectation of the ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. See Ezekiel 34:1-16; 16; Mic 5:1-9; Pss. Sol. 17; 4 Ezra 13:34-50; 2 Bar. 77-86). . . ." (see Schreiner 114). See also the previous note.

³⁷So He says to His disciples: “The harvest⁹ is abundant, yet the helpers are few. ³⁸Therefore, plead with the lord of the harvest¹⁰ that He dispatch workers¹¹ into His harvest.”

*Action taken: Jesus appoints **harvesters***

10:1 And having called together His twelve disciples, He gave them authority in relation to unclean spirits, so as to expel them, and to heal every disease and every malady.

The harvesters are vital, and thus nameworthy, agents of the harvester

²Speaking of the twelve apostles,¹² these are the[ir] names: first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James the [son] of Zebedee and John his brother; ¹³³Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the [son] of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas the Iscariot who delivered Him [over].¹⁴

THE EARLIER COMMISSION

⁵These twelve¹⁵ Jesus sent,¹⁶ commanding them by saying: [“Go not in the way of the Gentiles¹⁷ or a city of Samaritans.¹⁸ ⁶Go out rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.¹⁹] ⁷ Go out, verbally

⁹ Although the imagery of “harvest” is normally used of judgment in the OT, and with both John the Baptist and Jesus, I follow a minority in taking “harvest” here to refer to a time of kingdom proclamation and potential fulfillment.

¹⁰ The expression likely reflects an Aramaic expression meaning “chief-harvester”; in either case, it refers to God. Much has been written recently (for example, by Christopher Wright) to remind Christians that **God is the instigator of global missions**, and we the commissioned agents.

¹¹ Jewish hearers initially might have expected the laborers to be angels exacting punishment in keeping with harvest normally as judgment, but here they are **Christ-followers on a mission to rescue people (starting with Israel, 10:5-6) from judgment**.

¹² Apostle means “sent one.” Wiersbe, “It was used by the Greeks for the personal representatives of the king, ambassadors who functioned with the king’s authority. To make light of the king’s envoys was to be in danger of insubordination.”

¹³ “The twelve apostles were here named in pairs and probably were sent out in that fashion (“He sent them out two by two. [Mark 6:7])” (BNC, 41).

¹⁴ Hagner (266), “It is worth calling attention to the diverse and unusual character of the twelve, who include fishermen . . . , a tax collector, a zealot, and a traitor.”

¹⁵ The twelve tribes of Israel are not far in the background here; it is no accident that “twelve” disciples have been identified in vv. 1-4 and now in vv. 5 ff. go on mission only to Israel. **Jesus’ ideal vision is to be the Davidic shepherd king who unites an Israel which Solomon’s royal sons divided**. Note Matthew 19:28, Jesus says to Peter and others who have left everything to follow him, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

¹⁶ This verb, *apostellō*, is related to the noun, apostle.

¹⁷ My opinion is that this expression is likely loaded, either as a tempering or qualification of Jesus having established his ministry base in Galilee in the “way . . . of the Gentiles,” (4:15) and/or in the sense of **not following the moral path of the Gentiles**; cf. Psalm 1:1.

¹⁸ Matthew alone records vs 5-6, in keeping with his emphasis on matters Jewish. “Matthew maintains this [Israel only] view for Jesus’ earthly activity [compare 4:23-25], but opens the door for the mission to the Gentiles through the missionary mandate of the Risen One (28:19)” (Schnackenburg).

¹⁹ The expression “lost sheep of the house of Israel” occurs elsewhere only in 15:24, where Jesus initially rebuffs the Canaanite woman. “Like Paul, Jesus goes first to those of Israel, but when they reject his message, the way becomes open to the gentiles.” (Schreiner, 192).

proclaiming, “The kingdom of Heaven has drawn near!”⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, expel demons.²⁰

The fee structure

⁹You received at no cost, give at no cost.²¹ Put no gold, silver or [even] copper in your money belts, ¹⁰no sack for the journey, no extra undergarment, sandals or staff,²² for the worker merits sustenance.²³

The need for discernment

¹¹And into whatever city or village you enter, carefully determine who is suitably fitting in it; and there remain until you leave. ¹²And upon entering the house, greet it [with your peace].²⁴ ¹³And if it turns out the house is well fitting,²⁵ let your peace bestowal come upon it; but if it is not well fitting, let your peace bestowal come back on you. ¹⁴And should anyone not receive you or your message, upon exiting that house or town, shake the dust off your feet.²⁶

Warning for “them”

¹⁵I guarantee you that the land of Sodom and Gomorrah will fare better on the Day of Judgment than that city.”

Warning for “us”

¹⁶ Notice that I am sending you out like sheep amongst wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd²⁷ as snakes and innocent as doves.²⁸

The Experience of Persecution

²⁰ **These acts evidently required faith on the part of the disciples;** see Mt 17:16, 19-20. Not a sideshow or means of drawing a crowd, the healings are integral to the message; **Jesus’ salvation is not of mere souls but the whole person!**

²¹ France, “unlike the mercenary prophets who plagued the church by the end of the first century (Didache 11-12)” (p. 179).

²² Problem: Mark’s version mandates the taking of only one staff. Matthew likely forbids acquiring an extra staff.

²³ Compare 1 Cor 9:9–14. Schnackenburg, “As in Luke 10, the concrete instructions allow us a glimpse of primitive Christian wandering missionaries, who set out in the most extreme poverty but who could expect to be supported by the people who received them. Later **these words fired the hearts of Francis of Assisi and his companions.**” France (179), “The saying in its Matthean form thus does not so much specify the appropriate equipment for travelling, but rather assured the disciples that no previous fund-raising is necessary, nor . . . special equipment be acquired.”

²⁴ Muslims follow abiding Jewish practice even to today in saying “peace be upon you” (*salām ‘alaykum* in Arabic; *shālôm ‘alaykem* in Hebrew). As Gen. 27:33-38 aptly illustrates, **the bestowal of peace was no mere formality but thought of as effectual.** France (181), “The *peace* which they wish to the household goes out and is effective; but it is not automatic, and a wrong attitude in the receiver will result in its return, like an uncashed cheque.”

²⁵ Normally the word is translated “worthy,” but this conveys character, which isn’t integral to the meaning. The sense is more that of “suitable,” “someone able and willing to accommodate them, and would normally be someone open to their message, though not necessarily already committed to their cause” (France, 181).

²⁶ “A dramatic gesture of repudiation still in use in the Middle East,” perhaps reflecting “the later Jewish view that earth from a heathen territory brings uncleanness” (France, 181).

²⁷ The Greek word goes beyond “wise,” the conventional translation here, to denote also being prudent, clever, discriminating, or cunning; this is the word the Greek translation of the OT uses to describe the serpent in Genesis 3:1. Lack of such shrewdness would result in being “outsmarted.”

²⁸ France (182): “**Christians are not to be gullible simpletons. But neither are they to be rogues. Innocent** is literally ‘unmixed,’ i.e. pure, transparent; it demands not naivety, but an irreproachable honesty. **The balance of prudence and purity will enable Christians to both survive and to fulfill their mission to the world.**” Jesus’ response to the trick questions of the religious leaders is a good example of both these traits in action.

¹⁷Be on the lookout for men, for they will hand you over to the sanhedrins²⁹ and flog³⁰ you in their³¹ synagogues. ¹⁸And you will be brought before rulers and kings on account of me,³² as testimony³³ to them and to the Gentiles.³⁴ ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not become anxious³⁵ about how or what you will speak; what you will say will be given³⁶ to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you³⁷ who speak, but the Spirit of your Father³⁸ speaking through you.³⁹ ²¹Brother will surrender brother for death and a father [his] child; and children will rise up [and speak] against parents and [thus] have them put to death.⁴⁰ ²²And you will be hated

²⁹ France (p.182) notes that the word can refer either to the twenty-three-member council responsible for discipline in the local synagogue or to any formal body.

³⁰ Flogging was a punishment applied not for heresy but for disrupting the peace or disobedience (such as continuing to preach after being forbidden to do so); for examples, see Acts 5:40; 22:19, 2 Cor. 11:24. Tasker (?): V. 17 “suggests some Jewish-Christian missionaries had been hailed before Jewish courts. In many diaspora communities, such ‘councils’ probably consisted of the synagogue elders. Charged with breach of peace, they were sentenced to flogging, perhaps the thirty-nine lashes, perhaps a lesser beating with rods (see II Cor. 11:24-25). From Paul’s proud boast, “Five times I have received from Jews the forty lashes less one,” (ii Cor. 11:24), we realize that not all Christian Jews evoked this response from synagogue authorities. . . . Nevertheless, tensions between Jews and Jewish Christians must sometimes have been very intense, though actual martyrdoms were probably quite rare.” France’s comment implies the rarity of rarity at the time of Jesus:

³¹ “Matthew’s addition of ‘their’ points to a serious cleavage between the synagogue and Matthew’s Jewish-Christian community.” (Hagner).

³² “A significant . . . Christological statement” (5:11, 10:39, 16:25, 19:29). Compare “for God’s sake.”

³³ For a similar use of “testimony,” see Matt 8:4. It means “as a witness” in the sense of “confronting the authorities and the Gentiles in general with the truths they stood for, as Jesus’ own trial was to confront Pilate with the truth (Jn 18:33-38)” (France, 183). Compare Mt 24:14: “And this gospel . . . will be proclaimed throughout the whole world *as a testimony* to all nations, and then the end will come.” Implication: **receiving testimony heightens accountability.**

³⁴ Although governors and kings could apply to Jewish leaders (for example, respectively, Pilate and his contemporary Herod Antipas of Galilee), mention of “to the Gentiles” suggests Jesus is extrapolating from the immediate situation to include post-resurrection missions involving disciples working among Gentiles. For examples of disciples being arraigned in this way, see Acts 17:5-7; 18:12-17; 24:1-9; 25:1ff.)

³⁵ The same word as “be anxious” or “worry” as in 6:25; one concerns material goods, the other what to say or how under interrogation. The aorist tense in 10:29 is likely ingressive: “become anxious.”

³⁶ “Will be given” conveys not a vague source, but is reverentially idiomatic; **God will give it.**

³⁷ The Greek emphasizes “you” in “not you”; the effect is to emphasize not *us* but the work of *the Spirit*.

³⁸ **“Your” and “Father” is doubly intimate.** This is the only reference to “Spirit of the Father” in the NT. It has **Trinitarian significance** (compare Mk 13:11b: “The Holy Spirit”). Elsewhere in Matthew, the Spirit is concerned with the ministry of the Son, but **here the same Spirit who attended the Son in Matthew attends to us as we bear witness to the Son.** As well, reference to God’s Spirit speaking through his people perhaps connotes Joel 2:28-29; compare Acts 2:15-21.

³⁹ For an example of this later in the NT (Peter being questioned by elders), be sure to **read Acts 4:5–13**; see also 2 Tim 4:16-18: “*At my first defense no one came to stand by me. . . .¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So, I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*”

⁴⁰ France (183): “Jesus’ thought here extends beyond the immediate Galilean situation, where martyrdom at the hands of close relatives was not yet likely, to the passionate and all-consuming opposition which loyalty to his cause has evoked through the ages.” Gundry (193): “Here the verb *thanatōsousin* does not mean to kill or to condemn to death, but to cause to be condemned to death by means of accusations.” These words in general resonate with Micah 7:6; however, the disturbance of family unity at the social level there here turns lethal, owing to religious persecution.

by all on account of my name; but such a one⁴¹ who remains to the end will be saved.⁴² ²³When they persecute you in this city, run away to the other.⁴³ For truly I tell you, you will not finish all the cities of Israel until such time as the Son of man comes.

Maligning of Teacher and Disciple (24-25)⁴⁴

²⁴A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his lord. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to become like his master and the servant as his lord. ⁴⁵ If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul,⁴⁶ how much more his house-members!⁴⁷

Reasons Not to Fear Persecution (26-31)

²⁶Therefore, do not fear them, for there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known. ²⁷(What I say in the darkness, say in the light; and what you hear [from Me] in the ear, shout on the rooftops.⁴⁸) ²⁸And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; ⁴⁹ fear⁵⁰ rather the one able to destroy the body and the soul in Gehenna.⁵¹ ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a few pennies, and not one of them falls upon the earth apart from your Father. ³⁰And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Therefore, fear not—for you are worth more than many sparrows.⁵²

⁴¹ The expression “who remains” is singular; in a context of plurals, this implies a relative minority.

⁴² This same promise is given in another context of persecution in Mt 24:13. The nature of the “**salvation**” is not specified, but it clearly **does not include deliverance from persecution**.

⁴³ Importantly, this passage advocates escape over martyrdom, presumably in keeping with being as shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (v. 16).

⁴⁴ Here persecution is proverbialized to be *no* worse than that of the master, but—surprisingly—will be!

⁴⁵ Similarly, John 13:16 states, “The servant is not greater than his master; if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

⁴⁶ Important for understanding the logic of the text, the Beelzebul literally means “master of the house,” but its meaning was commonly understood to convey *more*, namely, “master of demons.” Importantly, “Beelzebul” thus conveys both the upper limit of “lord”—in keeping with the logic of vss 24-25a—and something even *more* (as in worse) than this—in keeping with the logic of vs 25b. (See the next footnote as well.) In short, what is the *same* as “lord” (vv. 24-25a) conveys even *more* (v. 25b).

⁴⁷ It is odd that, although the logic in what Jesus has just said in v 25a would lead us to expect that the suffering of the underling will *not* extend beyond that of “the head of the house,” Jesus here in 15b claims that it will! This is ominous. It is also a clever play on words; whereas “Beelzebul” literally means “head of the house”—on which understanding the underling’s persecution matches that of the head of the house—it conventionally conveys something worse: “prince of demons” (intimated in 9:34; confirmed in 12:24, 27; compare Mk 3:22, Lk 11:16–19). Jesus’ point seems to be that, just as His enemies will take the word Beelzebul *beyond* its normal sense which means lord/master (here “head of the house”) so too His servants’ persecution will go *beyond* that of the lord/master (Beelzebul).

⁴⁸ Hagner, “The Gospel, up till now veiled in a degree of secrecy, is to be made clear and plain through the preaching of the disciples.” Jesus’ words “will be revealed/known” denote divine inevitability; again Hagner: “**God is understood as the active agent working through the disciples.**”

⁴⁹ Though worded differently than v. 26 the logic is similar, as shown by the rephrasing: “don’t be afraid of people who can kill the body for they can’t kill the immortal soul.”

⁵⁰ Unlike the preceding words of fear, this verb is in the present; **keep fearing**.

⁵¹ The meaning of this clause is like that of v. 22b—“but such one who endures to the end will be saved”—but incentive here comes through consideration of the alternative; thus, **fear the devil**.

⁵² **The final comment about sparrows** comes after the concluding frame “therefore do not fear” (introduced in v. 26) and is thus **an add-on by Jesus for encouragement. In effect, “And, of course, you are certainly worth way more to God than even a lot of sparrows!**

