

An 10:1-4, Jesus gathers all twelve of his disciples and prepares them to carry on his work of making the nearness of God's kingdom known. If they are to do this, he will have to give them the ability to do the things that he does. In God's kingdom, all sources of destruction, evil, and death will be overcome. And so he enables them to cure every disease and to overpower all evil spirits.

This will be, as it were, a trial run. When he is no longer with them, they will be responsible to continue his work. In other words, the power of God's kingdom on earth is in knowing that God came to us rather than us finding God, that the knowledge of God consists of a revelation of God in our midst, and that this process begins with Jesus. It is Jesus who brings heaven to earth. It is Jesus who makes God known to human beings in history, and it is in Jesus that the power of God's redemption comes.

This is a proleptic event. In other words, the future appears in the present. The future of human history is entirely under the control of God. He decides where it is going before it even begins. This is an eternal election of God—a "predestination" if you will—that took place from all eternity. God doesn't make decisions in time because for him, all there is consists of an eternal now. Therefore, that the goal of human history is the redemption of the Kingdom of God was never in doubt. The ministry of Jesus is the appearance of this goal within history before it happens. History is purpose driven; that all evil influences will eventually be overcome is a preordained decision.

There is only one way that this preliminary fulfillment can appear before the fact; the agent who brings it about must be born into human history and demonstrate that he is the One through whom this goal will be achieved. And the only way anyone other than Jesus himself can also demonstrate this proleptically is if Jesus makes himself present through them. This is what he is doing here. He is present in them through faith, and they therefore can act as he acts.

In verses 5-15, Jesus gives them instructions as to how they should implement this ministry. In essence, they are to do so in the same way he does. He goes from town to town from among the children of Israel alone. He is the Jewish Messiah, and they receive his ministry first because he is the fulfillment of promises made only to Israel. They are the elect of God. God chose them to be his people, not because they were special in any way, but because that's what God decided to do. Being God, he needs no reason or justification for doing what he does. All of that is hidden in his divine wisdom and will be revealed when the time is right.

They are to preach the nearness of God's Kingdom, and then do the things that verify the truth of this claim: healing, overpowering evil, etc. They are to rely on hospitality alone. No need for preparations. Like their forebears in the desert, they rely on God's grace to do what they need to do. Moreover, should they be rejected by anyone, they are not to waste time either worrying about it, second guessing themselves, or feeling resentful. It

was their choice to reject the message so let it stay there, with them. Jesus then offers a warning about such rejection, and it's not nice.

In verses 16-25, Jesus warns them of possible persecution. When a person puts their allegiance and ultimate commitment, their heart and their soul into the message of the Kingdom, should a clash occur between this commitment and ANY other, the kingdom wins. The disciples are not just pushing a religion, an ideology, or some road to happiness. They are being obedient to the Lord of heaven and earth. They have been grasped by the power of God in the Spirit that Jesus gave them, and it's not possible to be committed to this on the one hand and to something else on the other. This includes family members, rulers, and religious leaders. As time goes by, they and those who come after will in fact experience this problem. So this text is as much predictive as it is a warning.

Also, it is essential that they not try and prepare arguments, reasons, or eloquent speeches in advance of conflict. This would miss the point. They are not in conflict with those who oppose the mission of spreading the message of the kingdom because folks disagree with their point of view—a point of view that could be defended by arguments. This is not a clash of ideologies. It's not Republicans versus Democrats. This is a clash of ultimate authority. The question is, "Who is in charge here?" And so their only option is to rely on the Holy Spirit to give them words with which to respond. As was the case with Jesus, when they will be called to account, the proper response is to throw the ball back into the court of their detractors. Put them on the defense because God needs no defense. That the Son of Man will return before they are finished in Israel may be a recollection of a prior belief that Jesus would return before the Apostles lives ended.

Jesus concludes by reminding them that, as he was treated, so will they be treated. They will be referred to as members of the household of "Beelzebub"—a reference to the devil.

In verses 26-33, Jesus exhorts them to be without fear. The Kingdom of God will come in God's good time. Any delay experienced by them should not cause concern that their message is false. Therefore, they should be bold in their proclamations. No need for secrecy. The truth will out for all to see.

Moreover, why fear those who can damage or kill the body but not the soul? Is it not the case that our eternal destiny is with God? Therefore, is it not the case that this life is but a wink of the eye? Would a person fear losing a penny when a pile of gold is at stake? Therefore, fear God and obey him instead of those who come with threats of bodily harm. Here, to fear means *to take seriously*. It means that we, if we understand what is truly at stake, would be more concerned to obey God than to cave in to the enemies of God. Their power is ultimately weakness. They have no real power because what they do has no lasting significance. Only God's actions last forever.

On top of that, God cares for us so much that even the hairs on our head are counted. He knows us and loves us. We are in his hands no matter what happens. Therefore, by being faithful to him, we are putting ourselves and our destiny in his hands. This is what he

means by “acknowledging us.” He is faithful. He will vindicate those who remain faithful to him.

In verses 34-39, Jesus says some things that have shocked those who understand him as the meek, mild, humble, and perpetually smiling person who gently holds the helpless lambs in his arms. This idea is a human projection, an image of Jesus that some folks would like to think represents who he truly is. Unfortunately, like all projections, they don’t reflect the reality of the person upon whom this imaginary image is placed. It’s a distortion based on wishful thinking or a limited understanding of the truth.

Jesus can be and is harsh when he deems it necessary in order to make a point. Here, he describes himself as a person who wields a sword so as not to bring peace but conflict. Indeed, that is exactly what he did. He ended up getting arrested, flogged, and crucified. His followers were martyred for centuries afterwards. Faith in him divided families and created enemies.

The reason for this unpleasantness is that when he claims a person, he claims all of that person. This should come as no surprise. The great commandment itself demands loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Moreover, contrary to some interpretations of that we should love our neighbor as ourselves means we really need to learn how to love ourselves more, this means putting the needs of our neighbor above those of ourselves. By nature, we don’t have to be told to love ourselves. This is a reflexive action. We are turned in on ourselves. We need to get unturned.

Thus, Jesus’ love demands all of our love in return. Moreover, when we love him thus, we receive our lives. When we don’t, we lose them, for only he can grant the everlasting life for which we were born.

The chapter ends with Jesus’ exhortation to receive those he sends to us. The Christian’s faith is not just an individual affair. It includes fellowship with those in whom we share the love of Christ.

*Thus endeth Chapter 10.*