

The Ministry of the Twelve
Matthew 10:1—8

Chapters 8 and 9 have highlighted Christ's teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This gospel is, in its simplest form, the good news about the prophetic Kingdom that was about to be set up. The Old Testament told of this Millennial Kingdom ruled by Christ (Isaiah 9:7; 16:5; Daniel 7:13—14) and now, according to Daniel's prophecy, this Kingdom was right around the corner and being proclaimed by John the Baptist, Christ and His disciples. This gospel was first proclaimed by John as He announced Israel's King was in their midst (Luke 16:16). This is a progression in the prophetic program of Israel and is not at all related to the Church, the Body of Christ. It includes the call for Israel to come into the kingdom by repenting of their sins and the sin of the nation turning away from God (Matthew 3:2; Luke 1:16). They also needed to be baptized for purification (John 3:23—25; Luke 7:29—30). This purification process was in preparation of their role as priests. If Israel (the leadership) had accepted the call to come into the Kingdom then the times of refreshing (the Millennial Kingdom) would have come in (Acts 3:19—21). With the announcement of the Kingdom came healing. These two things cannot be separated (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 10:6—9; Luke 10:9; 11:20).

Mark 16:15—18 ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel (of the Kingdom) to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

In contrast to this, healing is never connected to this Dispensation of Grace. The miracles performed by Paul were all confirmation of his apostleship and necessary to prove to the Hebrew church leaders (Peter and James) at Jerusalem that his message was from God. Since he usually went to the synagogue to preach, these miracles were also confirming the veracity of his message to each local Jewish congregation. His ability to do miracles passed away after his shipwreck on Malta. His last recorded miracle was that of healing many people on the island. After this, he was unable to heal as evidenced by Philippians 2:25—27 (Epaphroditus was sick to the point of death), 1 Timothy 5:23 (telling Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake) and 2 Timothy 4:20 (he left Trophimus sick at Miletus).

As Jesus looks over the multitudes in Matthew 9:36 He sees the sicknesses, the demon possession, the hurts, the weakness. They were sheep without a shepherd. The leadership of Israel had failed them and they had completely given up. Looking at all the work that needed to be done Jesus remarked that the harvest (work) was great but there were so few workers. It's with this last statement that Jesus begins to appoint workers to go out into the fields.

The Disciples become Apostles

A disciple is a student while an apostle is a sent one or a messenger. This change in title was given to the Disciples when they were commissioned by Christ to go out with the Gospel of the Kingdom. Along with this commission was given the power and authority over demons and the ability to heal. This probably happened about nine months before Christ's crucifixion. Before this time the Disciples were watching and learning. According to Luke 9, Peter, James and John experienced the Transfiguration shortly after their commission to go out and preach the Gospel. From Acts 10 we see that a little while later there were 70 additional disciples who were also commissioned with announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing the sick. They traveled ahead of Jesus to prepare the town for His coming.

The Disciples were strictly told to stay away from the Gentiles. Their ministry and message was to be restricted to the nation of Israel, specifically the lost sheep. This is because the Gentiles were to be

reached through the nation of Israel. Once Israel accepted the Gospel of the Kingdom they would then go out and preach to the Gentile nations. We see this in the so-called Great Commission. Matthew 28:19 tells us that the Disciples were to make disciples of ALL nations while Mark 16:15 says they were to preach the gospel to every creature. Acts 1:8 adds some additional details about the order of proclaiming the Gospel message. They were to begin in Jerusalem, go to all Judea, expand into Samaria and finally go to the farthest reaches of the earth.

This message that would go throughout the whole world is the Gospel of the Kingdom. Christ told this to the Disciples on His so-called Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

But these things have not happened yet. The whole world has not heard the Gospel of the Kingdom and Israel has not been glorified in the Millennial Kingdom. The problem centers on Israel and her rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Peter pleaded with Israel to accept Jesus as Messiah and promised if they did that the Millennial Kingdom would come to them. Their rejection of that offer lead God to temporarily rescind His offer of the Kingdom. God put Israel on hold while forming a new entity—the Body of Christ.

Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Paul explains the reason for the new program in Romans 11. Verse 32 says that God has locked up both Jew and Gentile in unbelief. When the Gentiles rejected God, He formed the nation of Israel to bring His message to the world. When Israel rejected God, He raised up Paul, gave him the Gospel of the Grace of God and His Gospel of Grace is now being preached. It's only after the Rapture that Israel will once again be "top dog" and God will use her to eventually save Gentiles under the Gospel of the Kingdom.

It is possible that Jesus told the two blind men in Matthew 9:30 not to say anything about their healing because there was already too much work for the few workers available. It is right after this that the Disciples were commissioned as workers and then the 70 disciples were commissioned so that there are now many more workers to do what needed to be done.

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