Matthew 10

The King Sends His Ambassadors

Key Verse

"The one who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. The one who has found his life will lose it, and the one who has lost his life on My account will find it."

Matthew 10:38-39

Big Idea

Yeshua sends His disciples as ambassadors of the King. They go with His authority and His message, depending upon His provision and representing Him before those who receive them and those who reject them. The mission will cost them something. Following the King means trusting Him in opposition, refusing to be ruled by fear, and remaining faithful even when allegiance to Him leads to the cross.

Introduction

The closing verses of chapter 9 showed Yeshua looking at the crowds with compassion because they were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd. He told His disciples that the harvest was plentiful but the workers were few, and instructed them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send workers into His harvest. Matthew 10 provides an immediate answer to that prayer: the disciples who were told to pray for workers discover that they are the workers. Yeshua calls them, equips them, and sends them.

Until now in Matthew's Gospel, the focus has rested largely upon Yeshua Himself. He has proclaimed the arrival of God's Kingdom, taught with an authority that astonished the crowds, and demonstrated His authority over sickness, demons, nature, sin, and even death. Now the story takes an important turn. Those who have watched the King at work are going to participate in His work. They possess no authority independently of Him; they exercise authority because He gives it to them. They are becoming His representatives - His ambassadors.

An ambassador does not travel in his own name or invent his own foreign policy. He represents the ruler who sent him. His authority is delegated, his message has been entrusted to him, and his conduct reflects upon the one he represents. That picture helps hold Matthew 10 together. The Twelve will proclaim Yeshua's Kingdom, exercise His authority, depend upon His provision, and discover that opposition to the King can become opposition to His representatives.

Yeshua does not disguise the cost. Matthew 10 is no recruitment advertisement promising an easier life. These men will encounter rejection, hostility, persecution, family division, and ultimately the cross. It is almost as though their first evangelistic "campaign" becomes "camp pain." There may be tongue-in-cheek humor in the expression, but not in the reality. Yeshua is preparing His followers for suffering, something He Himself will experience increasingly as Matthew moves toward the cross.

Yet suffering is not the whole story. The King who sends them also gives them what they need for the assignment. He gives authority, promises the Spirit's help, assures them of the Father's intimate care, and tells them that even the hairs of their heads are numbered. Matthew 10 therefore holds mission and suffering together. The King's ambassadors are not promised an easy road, but neither are they sent alone.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that the harvest and the workers belong to You. As we listen to Yeshua sending His first disciples, teach us what it means to represent Him faithfully. Give us compassion for people, wisdom when circumstances are difficult, courage when there is opposition, and humility to remember that the authority and the message are Yours. Keep us from measuring faithfulness merely by the response we receive. Above all, give us an allegiance to Yeshua that is greater than our desire for comfort, approval, or safety. Amen.

Commentary

The King Shares His Authority (Matthew 10:1–4)

Yeshua “summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (10:1). There is something almost startling about the sentence. These men have been watching Yeshua do exactly these things, and now He entrusts His authority to them. What belonged unmistakably to the ministry of King Messiah is now exercised through those He sends. They are no longer merely observers or students. They become participants in His mission.

The connection with chapter 9 is worth noticing again. Yeshua's compassion for the crowds produced the call to pray for workers, and now that same compassion sends workers to them. I believe that “the very same compassion requires the same authority.” That may be putting it strongly, but the sequence is important. Yeshua does not merely tell His disciples to feel sorry for distressed people. He equips them to serve those people. Compassion becomes action.

Matthew then names the Twelve. Simon Peter and Andrew are brothers, as are James and John. We find Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and finally Judas Iscariot. The list may look like a simple roll call, but what a strange collection of people the King has assembled. Fishermen stand alongside a former tax collector. Simon the Zealot bears a designation associated with fierce opposition to Roman rule, while Matthew had earned his living collecting taxes within the Roman system.

Humanly speaking, some of these men had very good reasons not to like one another. Yet Yeshua calls them into one community and gives them one mission.

That deserves some thought in our own divided age. The Kingdom does not require that every distinction of background, temperament, occupation, or opinion disappear. But those things can no longer occupy the primary place. Peter does not stop being Peter, Matthew does not erase his past, and Simon does not cease to have a history. Their allegiance to the King, however, becomes greater than the identities and convictions that might otherwise separate them.

Matthew's own place in the list is especially interesting. He calls himself “Matthew the tax collector.” We already know that. He told us about his call in chapter 9. Yet he mentions it again here, almost as though he does not want us—or himself—to forget where Yeshua found him. He gives himself no special billing because he is writing the Gospel. He simply stands among the others as a man whom the King called and grace transformed.

Then there is Judas Iscariot, “the one who also betrayed Him.” He receives the same summons and is included among the Twelve, yet Matthew's readers already know where his story will end. That is sobering. Being near Yeshua, participating in ministry, and being counted among His people are not substitutes for continuing allegiance to Him. The effectiveness of the mission never rested upon the perfection of these ambassadors. It rested upon the authority and faithfulness of the King who sent them.

And that brings us to the first great principle of Matthew 10: the ambassador has no independent authority. Everything begins with the King. He summons. He gives. He sends. The disciples' task is to represent Him faithfully.

Next comes the surprising limitation Yeshua places on their first assignment: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles…but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (10:5)

The First Assignment — Israel First (Matthew 10:5–15)

The first instructions Yeshua gives the Twelve are surprisingly restrictive: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5–6). We know where Matthew’s Gospel will eventually take us. At the end of the book, the risen Yeshua will send His disciples to “all the nations” (28:19). But we are not there yet. Here the mission is deliberately and specifically Jewish.

That limitation is important. Yeshua did not come to Israel as though Israel were merely one convenient starting point among many. His coming belongs to the story God had already been writing through Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. The promises were given to Israel. The Messiah was promised to Israel generations ago. The kingdom language these disciples were about to use belonged to Israel’s Scriptures and Israel’s hope. So when Yeshua sends out His ambassadors for the first time, He sends them to Israel.

Matthew has already prepared us for this. Yeshua is the son of David and the son of Abraham (1:1). The Magi called Him "King of the Jews" (2:2). John announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (3:2), and Yeshua took up precisely the same proclamation (4:17). Now the Twelve are told to carry that announcement throughout Israel: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (10:7).

This is not hostility toward the Gentiles. Matthew has already included Gentiles in the story, and Yeshua has already praised the faith of a Roman centurion (8:5–13). Rather, there is an order to the mission. Israel first does not mean Israel only. Paul will later express something similar when he describes the Gospel as "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). God's widening mission to the nations does not erase His dealings with Israel; it grows out of them.

And notice what the Twelve are to do as they proclaim the kingdom: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons" (10:8). Their proclamation is accompanied by deeds. The kingdom is not merely something they explain. People are given visible signs of the authority of the King they proclaim.

Yet the disciples must never confuse delegated authority with personal importance. Yeshua immediately tells them, "Freely you received, freely give" (10:8). They did not earn this authority. They did not purchase it. They were not selected because they had mastered some spiritual technique. Everything they possessed for this mission had been given to them.

That makes the next instructions more understandable. They are not to stockpile money for the journey or prepare themselves as though the success of the mission depended upon their resources. They are to travel lightly and depend upon the hospitality they receive (10:9–10). "The worker is worthy of his support," Yeshua says. Those who carry the message may receive the hospitality of those who welcome it, but the Gospel itself is never merchandise.

When they enter a town or village, they are to find someone "worthy" and remain there until they leave (10:11). They are not to move from house to house looking for increasingly comfortable accommodation. Their presence is not a social tour. They have been sent with a message.

They enter a house with a greeting of peace. The Hebrew idea of shalom carries considerably more than our casual "hello." It speaks of well-being, wholeness and peace. The ambassadors of the King arrive offering peace, but that peace is connected with the reception of the King's message.

Not everyone will receive them.

Yeshua prepares the Twelve for that reality before they ever leave. "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet" (10:14). There is something wonderfully freeing about this instruction. The disciples are responsible for faithfully delivering the message. They are not responsible for making people

accept it. As a missionary among my people for decades, I am often asked of our 'success' rate. This text reminds me the Lord of the harvest said dust-shaking is also part of the program.

Shaking the dust from their feet is a serious symbolic act. Rejection has consequences. Yeshua makes that unmistakable when He says that it will be "more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (10:15). Greater revelation brings greater responsibility. These towns are not merely turning away traveling teachers. They are being confronted with the announcement of God's kingdom through representatives personally commissioned by the King.

That gives us another principle of the ambassador's calling. An ambassador does not alter the message according to the response. If people welcome it, he speaks. If people reject it, he still speaks. He does not become arrogant when received or defeated when rejected. His responsibility is faithfulness.

And there is an important balance here. Yeshua gives His disciples extraordinary authority, yet He also teaches them extraordinary dependence. They can heal the sick and cast out demons, but they must depend upon someone else for dinner and a bed. They carry the authority of the King while remaining utterly dependent upon the King.

That is a useful corrective for anyone involved in ministry. Spiritual authority and personal self-sufficiency are not the same thing. The disciples go because they have been sent. They speak because they have been given a message. They minister because they have received authority. And they depend upon God for what happens next.

But Yeshua is not finished preparing them. So far He has spoken about towns, houses, hospitality and rejection. Now the horizon becomes darker. The opposition will not always amount to a closed door or an unwelcome reception.

Sheep Among Wolves — Matthew 10:16–23

"I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves."

That is hardly the recruitment slogan we might expect. Yeshua does not promise the Twelve that obedience will make their path easy. He has given them authority over unclean spirits and disease, but that authority does not make them invulnerable. They are still sheep, and there are wolves out there.

Notice again who is responsible for the sending: "I send you." They have not wandered into dangerous territory through bad judgment. They are there because the King sent them there. Opposition, therefore, is not necessarily evidence that something has gone wrong. Sometimes opposition comes precisely because the disciples are where Yeshua told them to be.

Then comes one of Yeshua's memorable combinations: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (10:16). We might prefer one or the other. Some believers pride themselves on being shrewd, while others imagine that faithfulness requires a kind of naiveté. Yeshua allows

neither. His ambassadors are to understand the world in which they operate without becoming like it. Wisdom without innocence can be pompous; innocence without wisdom can become foolishness. Yeshua calls for both.

The warning becomes specific. “Beware of men,” He says. The disciples will be handed over to courts and flogged in synagogues. They will be brought before governors and kings because of Him (10:17–18). The mission that begins among the villages of Israel will eventually carry Yeshua’s followers into much wider settings. What starts as local opposition will put them before rulers and Gentiles.

But even opposition becomes an opportunity for testimony. Yeshua says they will be brought before governors and kings “as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles” (10:18). The courtroom is not merely a place where the disciple is on trial. It becomes another place in which the King is proclaimed. Those who think they have summoned the ambassador may discover that the ambassador has been sent to them. Think of the term “witness stand.”

Yeshua then tells them not to become anxious about what they will say. “For it will be given you in that hour what you are to say” (10:19). This is not an excuse for lazy preaching or careless preparation. The setting here is persecution, not the ordinary morning chapel service. Yeshua is assuring disciples dragged unexpectedly before authorities that they will not be abandoned when they must answer for their allegiance to Him.

I have experienced this reality time and again. People who ask me a question during a public gathering or in the privacy of a coffee meeting with a serious Bible student or any number of venues when I honestly do not know the answer. I repeat the question. I pause and then lean forward as if I’m ready, when all the while I’m not ready. Then, as if the cue card drops from heaven, I know, and I answer, and the crowd and the coffee student are not aware, but I am. I know that I didn’t know. Then I know that I do know. That comes from One above. And that makes me love Him that much more.

“For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (10:20). The disciples who are dependent upon God for food and shelter are also dependent upon Him for words. Once again, everything necessary for the mission is supplied by the One who sends them.

The opposition will become painfully personal. Brother will betray brother, fathers will turn against children, and children against parents. “You will be hated by all because of My name” (10:22). Allegiance to Yeshua can cut across even the closest human loyalties. The King does not hide that cost from His ambassadors.

Then comes a sentence that needs to be heard carefully: “It is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved” (10:22). Yeshua is describing perseverance under pressure. The disciple does not merely begin the journey enthusiastically; he continues. The same chapter that began with Judas among the Twelve now reminds us that proximity to Yeshua’s people is not the same as enduring allegiance to Yeshua Himself.

Yet endurance does not mean standing still unnecessarily. “Whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next” (10:23). There is no virtue in remaining merely to prove our courage. Sometimes faithfulness means staying; sometimes it means leaving and carrying the message somewhere else. The mission matters more than demonstrating our bravery.

The final words of verse 23 are among the more difficult sayings in Matthew's Gospel: “You will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.” What does Yeshua mean by His coming, and when should the disciples expect it? The difficulty is understandable. He is speaking to the Twelve about a mission to Israel, yet His warnings about persecution seem to reach well beyond their first journey. The verse forces us to consider both the immediate setting and the larger story Matthew is telling.

Some understand this coming as Yeshua's vindication through His death, resurrection, and exaltation. Others connect it with God's judgment upon Jerusalem in AD 70, when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. Still others understand it as His future return in glory, especially in light of the language about the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13–14 and Matthew 24:30. Each interpretation raises questions. The first two must explain why Yeshua describes the mission as unfinished when He comes; the third must explain why He speaks as though this coming bears directly upon the mission of the Twelve. We should acknowledge those difficulties rather than pretending the timing is obvious.

What I find especially significant is that Yeshua does not tell His disciples to complete the mission at any cost or remain in a hostile town until they have persuaded everyone. He tells them to move on when persecuted. The mission to Israel remains important, but its outcome and timetable belong to the Son of Man. The ambassadors are responsible for their witness, not for controlling history. Whether we understand His coming here as vindication, judgment, or His ultimate return, the disciples must keep serving under His authority. The King, not His opponents, will have the final word.

That matters because persecution can create the illusion that the wolves are in control. They are not. Governors are not. Nor are kings and religious courts. Even hostile families are not. The King who sends His ambassadors remains King. Then in those days, and today.

The disciples therefore need neither triumphalism nor despair. They are sheep among wolves, wise yet innocent, vulnerable yet accompanied by the Spirit of their Father. They may be rejected, arrested or driven from one town to another, but none of those things cancels the mission.

And Yeshua now takes the lesson one step further. Why should the disciple expect to escape the treatment given to his Master?

Do Not Fear Them — Matthew 10:24–33

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master” (10:24). Yeshua has just warned the Twelve about courts, the prominent, hostile families and persecution. Now He

gives them the reason they should not be surprised. If they represent Him faithfully, they should expect some of the same treatment He receives.

“It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master” (10:25). That is a remarkable definition of discipleship. The goal is not merely to know what the teacher knows but to become like the teacher. This is a key element of discipleship according to Bible teacher John Mark Comer in his book *Practicing the Way*. And if the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, those belonging to His household should not expect universal admiration. Matthew has already shown the Pharisees attributing Yeshua’s authority over demons to “the ruler of the demons” (9:34). The accusation against the Master will eventually spill over onto His followers.

Then, almost abruptly, Yeshua says, “Therefore do not fear them” (10:26). In fact, some form of “do not fear” occurs three times in this short section. Yeshua does not deny that there is something frightening about what He has just described. Rather, He tells His disciples that fear must not determine their faithfulness.

The first reason is that what is presently concealed will eventually be revealed. “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be known” (10:26). Opposition can distort the truth. People can misrepresent the messenger and malign the message. But they do not control the final disclosure. God does.

Therefore, “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim on the housetops” (10:27). The private instruction of the disciples is intended to become public proclamation. They are not being initiated into a secret society whose truths are reserved for a select few. What they receive from Yeshua is to be announced.

Then comes the second “do not fear”: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul” (10:28). That is a sobering way to offer encouragement. Yeshua does not say that His enemies cannot hurt them. They can. History confirms that Yeshua is predicting that some will even be killed. His point is that human authority has a boundary. There is something the persecutor cannot touch.

Instead, Yeshua says, “Rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The fear of God puts every other fear into perspective. If the disciples allow fear of people to determine what they say, they have forgotten whose ambassadors they are. Their ultimate accountability is not to the crowd, the synagogue court, the governor or the king. It is to God.

But Yeshua does not leave them trembling before divine judgment. Immediately He speaks of sparrows.

“Are two sparrows not sold for a copper coin? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father” (10:29). These are insignificant creatures in the marketplace, worth almost nothing in human accounting. Yet not one is outside the Father’s knowledge. Then Yeshua makes it personal: “Even the hairs of your head are all counted” (10:30).

This is not sentimental reassurance detached from the danger He has just described. The disciples may actually suffer. The sparrow may actually fall. The promise is not that we will live pain free forever. The promise is that nothing happens outside His knowledge and care.

Then comes the third command: “So do not fear; you are more valuable than a great number of sparrows” (10:31). Fear is answered not by pretending the wolves are harmless but by remembering the Father. The disciple’s security rests ultimately in being known by Him.

That leads naturally to confession. “Therefore, everyone who confesses Me before people, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven” (10:32). The ambassador who publicly identifies with the King discovers that the King identifies with him before the Father. What an extraordinary reversal. The disciples may stand before earthly courts because of Yeshua, but Yeshua speaks their names in the court that finally matters.

A word about confession. Whether in a court of law, a police investigation, or a Catholic church, the word confess may mean different things. Yeshua is using it in its literal form, “To agree with.” When we confess our sins to God, we are not surprising God with the information. He already knows our sins. What we are doing is agreeing together with Him, and our ‘yes’ is to His calling us to repent. In the same way when we confess Yeshua as Lord, we are not making it to happen; we are agreeing together with God that Yeshua is indeed Lord.

The warning that follows is equally serious: “Whoever denies Me before people, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (10:33). Once again Matthew will eventually show us how complicated discipleship can be. Peter himself will deny Yeshua, yet his failure will not be the end of his story. So this verse should not be reduced to the idea that one frightened failure places a person forever beyond grace. The larger concern is allegiance. When pressure comes, to whom do we belong?

That brings the ambassador theme into sharp focus. An ambassador cannot represent a king while denying any connection with him. The entire calling depends upon identification with the one who sent him.

And so Yeshua has moved His disciples from danger to fear, and from fear to the Father. They will be opposed. They may be maligned. They may even die. Yet they are known, valued and remembered by God. The appropriate response is not silence but faithful confession.

But if we imagine that following Yeshua will therefore bring peace to every human relationship, His next words are startling:

The Cost of Allegiance — Matthew 10:34–39

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (10:34). These are startling words from Yeshua. We associate Messiah with peace, and rightly so. Yet Yeshua is not saying that His purpose is to create conflict or that His disciples should become combative people. The “sword” here describes what happens when people

respond differently to the King. Some receive Him and others reject Him, and that difference can divide even the closest relationships.

Yeshua makes the point by drawing upon Micah 7:6: “For I came to turn a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a person’s enemies will be the members of his household” (Matthew 10:35–36). The pain becomes very personal now. Earlier Yeshua spoke about courts, governors and hostile crowds. Those enemies are outside. Here the opposition can be sitting across the dinner table.

For Jewish followers of Yeshua, this has often been particularly painful. Following Messiah may be understood by family members not simply as adopting another religious opinion but as rejecting family, community and Jewish identity itself. The disciple may know that this is not what he or she intends at all, but the misunderstanding can still be costly. Yeshua does not minimize that pain. He prepares His followers for the possibility that allegiance to Him will strain relationships they deeply value.

Then He pushes the issue still further: “The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (10:37). Yeshua is not commanding us to love our families less. Scripture repeatedly requires us to honor parents, love spouses, care for children and accept responsibility for those closest to us. The issue is the word “more.” No human relationship, however precious, should occupy the place belonging to the King.

That is an astonishing claim. Yeshua does not merely ask to become an important part of our lives. He claims ultimate allegiance. The ambassador cannot finally answer to family, culture, reputation or personal safety if any of those demand that he deny the King who sent him.

Then comes the cross.

“The one who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (10:38). We hear those words after two thousand years of Christian history, when the cross has become jewelry, architecture, artwork and a familiar religious symbol. The Twelve did not hear it that way. They knew the cross as an instrument of Roman execution, humiliation and death. A man carrying a cross was not on his way to a difficult afternoon. He was on his way to die.

And Yeshua says this before His own crucifixion. He has not yet carried His cross to Golgotha, but already He tells His followers that discipleship has a cross-shaped character. Following the King means surrendering the right to make self-preservation our highest priority.

This is really the theme of chapter 10. Yeshua sends His ambassadors with authority, but not with a guarantee of comfort. They may be welcomed or rejected, listened to or opposed. They may find doors open before them or discover enemies within their own households. Representing the King is not a light assignment.

Then comes one of the great paradoxes of discipleship: “The one who has found his life will lose it, and the one who has lost his life on My account will find it” (10:39). Everything in us

naturally wants to preserve life, secure our future and protect what we possess. Yeshua turns that instinct upside down. A life organized around preserving itself will ultimately be lost. A life surrendered to Him discovers what life was meant to be.

This is not a celebration of suffering for suffering's sake. Yeshua does not tell His disciples to search for persecution, manufacture conflict or prove their devotion through unnecessary hardship. Earlier in this very chapter He told them that when they are persecuted in one city, they should flee to another. The cross is not recklessness. It is allegiance.

That distinction matters. Sometimes believers can imagine that every difficulty they experience is evidence of carrying the cross. It is not. Some difficulties are simply consequences of our own poor choices. The cross Yeshua describes is the cost that comes because we follow Him.

And so the question underneath this section is not whether family matters, whether peace matters, or even whether life matters. They all do. The question is what matters most. Who finally has our allegiance?

The answer for the ambassador must be the King.

Yet Matthew 10 does not end with persecution, division or death. Yeshua finishes His instructions with something much gentler. There will be people who receive His ambassadors, welcome them and even offer something as ordinary as a cup of cold water.

And the King notices.

Receiving the King's Ambassadors — Matthew 10:40–42

"Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (10:40). With that sentence Yeshua brings us back to the central image running through this chapter. The Twelve are ambassadors. They do not travel in their own names, proclaim their own message, or exercise their own authority. The King has sent them. Therefore, receiving His representatives becomes a way of receiving the King they represent.

But Yeshua takes the relationship one step further. Receiving the disciple means receiving Yeshua, and receiving Yeshua means receiving the Father who sent Him. There is a chain of sending here: the Father sends the Son, the Son sends His disciples, and the disciples carry the message of the Kingdom into the world. The authority always moves back toward its source. The ambassador matters because of the King he represents, and the King reveals the Father who sent Him.

That also helps explain why rejection has been treated so seriously throughout the chapter. When the disciples were told to shake the dust from their feet, Yeshua was not defending their wounded pride. Rejecting the ambassador is significant because of the message and the King he represents. In the same way, welcoming the ambassador is more than offering hospitality to a weary traveler. It can be an expression of openness to the One who sent him.

Yeshua then speaks about receiving a prophet “in the name of a prophet” and a righteous person “in the name of a righteous person” (10:41). The point is not that everyone must have the same calling or that each person needs a title. A person does not have to be the prophet in order to participate in the prophet’s work. Those who recognize, welcome and support what God is doing share in the work and are not forgotten by God.

Then Yeshua makes the gift almost ridiculously small: “Whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (10:42). A cup of water requires no great wealth, education or public ministry. Almost anyone can give it. Yet the King notices.

That is an encouraging way for this demanding chapter to end. Matthew 10 has spoken about healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those with leprosy, casting out demons, appearing before governors and kings, enduring persecution, confessing Yeshua publicly, losing family relationships, and taking up the cross. Those are enormous matters. Then Yeshua ends with a cup of water.

Kingdom service is not measured only by what attracts attention. Some are sent publicly. Others open their homes. Some preach. Others provide for those who preach. Some stand before governors. Others quietly encourage the person who must stand there. The mission of God has room for those who go and those who help them go. Hospitality, generosity, encouragement and practical service are not secondary ministries. They are ways of participating in the King’s mission.

This also completes the movement that began at the end of chapter 9. Yeshua told His disciples to pray for workers. Then He made them the workers. He gave them authority, entrusted them with His message, warned them about rejection, promised the Father’s care, prepared them for suffering, and demanded their highest allegiance. Now He reminds them that they will not always be rejected. Some people will receive them, and even the smallest act of kindness offered because they belong to Yeshua is seen by God.

The King does not overlook faithful service.

That may be one of the most encouraging truths in Matthew 10. The ambassador may never know the full effect of his work. He may experience rejection more vividly than success. But the mission belongs to the King. He sees the public proclamation and the private sacrifice. He sees the disciple who speaks and the person who gives him a cup of water.

Nothing offered faithfully to the King is insignificant.

Takeaways

Greater revelation brings greater responsibility.

Israel first does not mean Israel only.

What we receive from Yeshua is to be announced.

The ambassador has no independent authority; we represent the King who sends us.

Opposition does not necessarily mean we are outside God's will.

The fear of God puts the fear of people into perspective.

Taking up the cross is not seeking suffering; it is choosing allegiance to Yeshua whatever the cost.

The King does not overlook faithful service.

Memory Verse

"The one who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. The one who has found his life will lose it, and the one who has lost his life on My account will find it."

Matthew 10:38-39

What's Next?

Matthew 10 has been about sending. Yeshua commissions His ambassadors, gives them authority, warns them about opposition, and calls them to an allegiance that may cost them dearly. Chapter 11 changes the perspective. Instead of disciples going out with questions about Yeshua, people begin bringing questions back to Him.

Most surprisingly, one of those questions comes from John the Baptizer. John had announced the coming Messiah. He had baptized Yeshua and had heard the voice from heaven. Yet now he is in prison, and what he hears about Yeshua apparently does not match everything he expected Messiah to be doing. So he sends his disciples with an extraordinarily candid question: "Are You the Coming One, or are we to look for someone else?" (Matthew 11:3).

Yeshua does not rebuke John for asking. Instead, He points to what is happening: the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

Matthew 11 will therefore take us from mission to expectation. What happens when God is at work, but not quite in the way we expected? What do we do with doubt, disappointment, and unanswered questions? And what does Yeshua's answer tell us about the kind of Messiah He really is?