

Session 8

Jesus' Missionary Teaching: Mt 10

In the first nine chapters of the Gospel, the evangelist inserts Jesus into Israel's story as God's faithful son (Mt 1-2), presents him as God's Beloved One (Baptism), and faithfully docile to God's Word and Spirit (Temptation story) (Mt 3-4). Jesus speaks God's Word for disciples receptive to the Kingdom of God (Mt 5-7) and enacts God's Word in healing actions that reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God (Mt 8-9).

Now, in Mt 10, we come to the second of five teaching discourses unique to Matthew's Gospel. Jesus teaches about mission, how to prepare for it, what to expect and its consequences. This address, like everything in the Gospel, is primarily intended for Matthew's Gospel audience.

Video Session 10

As a result of this session, you will:

- Understand what Matthew's Jesus teaches about mission, acknowledging the issues and challenges already surfacing within the Gospel community;
- Nuance Matthew's presentation of the disciples' "mission to Israel";
- Highlight the theological basis for mission, especially its contemporary relevance;
- Identify what is important for mission and the theological theme about the "nearness" of God's Kingdom.
- Critique any mission to convert the Jews to Christianity.

11th Century CE Fresco: Jesus and his disciples at the Synagogue in Capernaum

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Mt 10: Jesus' Teaching about Mission

Literary Structure and Themes

- There are four thematic divisions in Jesus' missionary teaching in Mt 10:

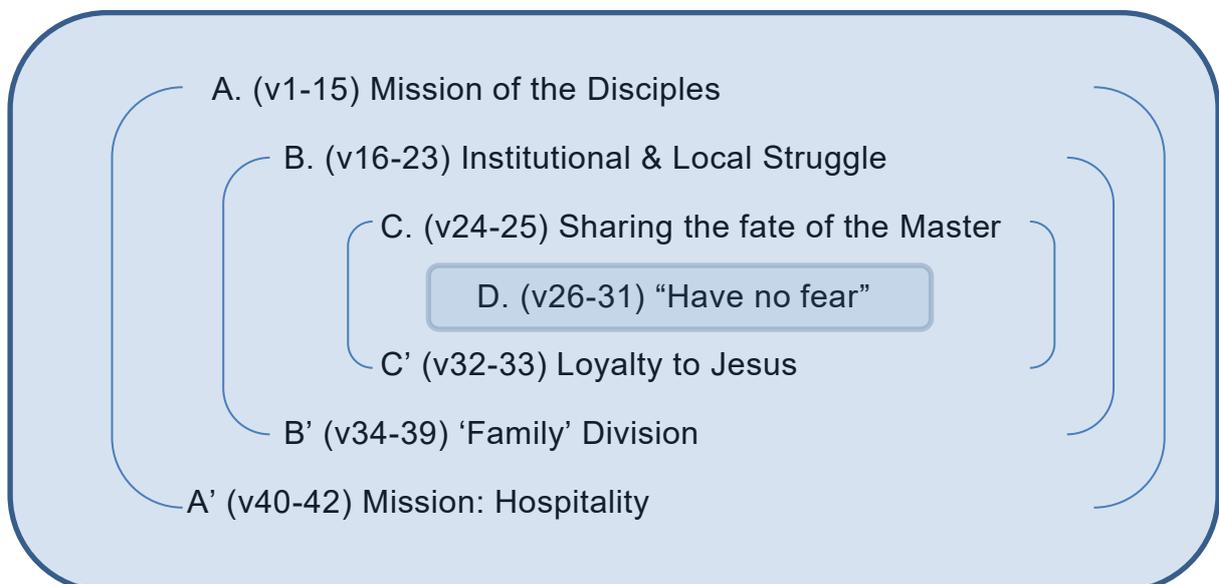
1. V1-5: Introduction and Mission Orientation
2. V5-15: Mission to Israel
3. V16-25: Future Sufferings
4. V26-42: Other instructions

Daniel Harrington writes,

The first part of the mission discourse (10:5b-15) emphasizes the continuity between Jesus' mission and that of the twelve. They are to say and do as Jesus said and did. Their simple lifestyle was not so much an exercise in asceticism as it was a testimony to the overriding importance of proclaiming God's kingdom. The mission to Israel was undertaken against an eschatological horizon.

Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007), 143.

The above divisions are also thematically balanced, creating a chiasm, an ordered literary construct that highlights the central teaching, "have no fear" (v26-31)—the spirit that should accompany disciples on a mission of proclamation in uncertain contexts:



Summary

- Jesus apprentices are called to proclaim the nearness of God's Reign.
- This will happen not without suffering and persecution and inter-familial betrayal and conflict—reflective of what is happening Matthew's day.

As Brendan Byrne notes, "Faced with situations of conflict and betrayal, believers could draw comfort from the fact that all this has been foreseen by Jesus and placed within a wider perspective"

B. Byrne, *Lifting the Burden* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 89.

- The disciples are to do this mission with a lightness of being and possessions and, ultimately, trust God.

For Reflection

- What parallels can you see between Jesus' teaching in Mt 10, the experience of Matthew's Gospel audience and our own day?