

Come Follow Me March 11 – 17

Matthew 10–12; Mark 2; Luke 7; 11

These Twelve are Sent Forth

Try to imagine organizing a following at the time of Christ. Nowadays, we have amazing ways of communicating instantly around the world via communications networks and the internet. We have satellites in the heavens to relay these messages. But in Christ's world, messages were either spoken to someone standing next to you or written and carried by runners to another person. How do you control the message in this situation and make sure everyone has received the correct information and knows what to do with it?

Christ saw that His growing flock of sheep had no shepherds but Him. And many outside influences meant to scatter them. He called twelve apostles and later seventy to help them in the work. All of the twelve apostles were of the tribe of Judah, and they were an interesting group. Fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot (Simon Peter) — not a single scribe among them. None were Sadducees, either. As far as material success they gravitated toward the lower rungs of the social ladder. They became great leaders and missionaries, proving that the Lord sees our hearts and not our social status.

Right at the beginning of the Come Follow Me lesson for Individuals and Families it says, "Today the need for more laborers to serve Heavenly Father's children is just as great. There are still twelve apostles, but there are more disciples of Jesus Christ than ever before—people who can declare to all the world, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 10:7).

This made me curious. How many converts did Jesus and His called servants gather during their Holy Land ministry? After an online search, I came upon [a dissertation by David C. Sim](#) of Australia. He cites the finding of Stark and Hopkins, solid scholars of early Christianity, and approximates the number of faithful converts from Judaism in 40 AD to be 1,000 souls. Here is a quote from his dissertation:

Stark begins his analysis with a rough estimation of six million Christians in the Roman Empire (or about ten percent of the total population) at the start of the fourth century. He then argues, on the assumption of 1,000 Christians in the year 40 that this figure could have been reached through a natural and consistent growth of 40 percent per decade. What makes this a feasible rate of growth is that it compares very favourably with the **expansion of the Mormon Church** in more recent times, which has grown at a rate of 43 percent per decade. This method of calculating total Christian numbers in the first century renders the following approximate results. There were 1,000 Christians in the year 40; 1,400 Christians in 50; 1,960 Christians in 60; 2,744 Christians in 70; 3,842 Christians in 80; 5,378 Christians in 90; and 7,530 Christians at the end of the first century.

These figures are very suggestive, and reinforce the point that in its initial decades the Christian movement represented a tiny fraction of the ancient world .

I want to ask him about the few thousand who were converted just 50 days after Christ's death at Pentecost when the apostles spoke in tongues (Acts 2). But yes, the early Church was very small, and

Christ Himself has told us that He was rejected by His own. The early church saw it's major growth among the Gentiles. This emphasizes the truth of the statement, "Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise" (Alma 37:6).

The Lord gave His servants the power to work:



The Jews had the Aaronic Priesthood, and even the high priest served under this priesthood. There had been no prophet in Israel for 400 years. Christ honored this priesthood but not its servants at the time. Instead, He formed His own leadership structure outside "tradition." He gave His servants the higher priesthood with the power to confer the Holy Ghost. And not only that but the power to heal and to cast out evil spirits. No Aaronic priest could do anything like this. This was startling in the established culture and caused fractures in society and even among friends and family.

Fear not (Matthew 10):

These are pretty scary things that Christ prophesied for the future of His apostles, all of whom ended up as martyrs for the faith. Christ's words may have shaken them, but they were chosen for their strength of faith. Christ knew they would continue on even in the face of death.

I came not to send peace, but a sword (Matthew 10:34):

Not everyone will accept the gospel of Christ, and the "wicked" who hear it are often angered to the point that they will try to destroy both the gospel and those who follow it. Christ offers peace "not as the world giveth" to us, but it is inner peace, not peace in the world. In Matthew 11 and Luke 7 Jesus praises John the Baptist as His forerunner and prophesies that beginning with John there would be no peace between His followers and the world.

It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 11:20 - 24):

Christ is again condemning those of Israel who have failed to repent and said that Gentile cities (Tyre and Sidon are in what is now Lebanon) would have repented had He taught them. Jesus added to the insult by saying that even Sodom would fare better at the judgment (another Gentile city of the past, destroyed for its wickedness).

I will have mercy and not sacrifice (Matthew 12:7):

It's a mistake to think that the Law of Moses was not spiritual, but just the letter of the law. But the Pharisees were focused on the foundational laws of Moses to the letter, the laws of repentance and sacrifice, and they had forgotten mercy. Also, under King Josiah, much of the spirituality of the preparatory gospel had been stripped away. Christ wanted the gospel to be written in our hearts, a gospel of mercy and love.

When thine eye is single (Luke 11:34):

"The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness."

This verse is worthy of a long discussion. See how it relates to the following verses:

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall **see eye to eye** when the Lord shall bring again Zion" (3 Nephi 16:18).

When we read this verse we envision the people of Zion agreeing, seeing eye to eye, **with each other**, but that's not what it means. Look at this verse:

"For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have **seen eye to eye** as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God" (Alma 36:26).

To see eye to eye means to see eye to eye with God Himself. In Zion, each member does that. When you have seen with God's eyes, when you are in perfect agreement with Him, you are filled with light.