

Two Things Jesus Did that the Church Needs to Understand and Duplicate

By Bob Young

Summarizing the life of Jesus—his actions and his teachings—in a few words or ideas is not easy. That Jesus came preaching the kingdom would certainly have to be included in a complete summary. Matthew says Jesus came preaching, teaching, and healing, in preparation for the supreme truth that he came to die. Mark describes Jesus as mighty in works and words. Luke helps us understand Jesus' desire to include Gentiles.

How did Jesus understand his identity and mission? What were the goals of his ministry? Jesus' works and words are designed to communicate his authority—cleansing the temple, forgiving sins, predicting his death, his triumphal entry, his distinct style of teaching, and ultimately, his resurrection.

Jesus came demonstrating his authority by calling disciples.

From the early days of his ministry, Jesus called disciples (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20), promising to make them fishers of men. The idea of discipleship was common in the first century as many students sought to follow a rabbi who would teach them. Generally, rabbis did not seek students. Jesus was unique because he called certain disciples to himself. Jesus' demands for commitment were also unique.

Multitudes followed Jesus, but the Twelve were a unique group of disciples. Matthew consistently refers to the apostles as disciples. The connection between the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles should not be overlooked.

- **Imitators.** His disciples would imitate him. Disciples were students or learners. They sought to understand and live out the teachings of the Master. Their goal was to be like the Teacher, the one who had authority. Paul uses imitation language when he describes baptism as participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:1-6).
- **Disciple-makers.** His disciples would make more disciples. Jesus claims authority, and immediately after, Jesus' last words in Matthew's gospel instruct his disciples to go make more disciples. Becoming a disciple involved baptism in the name of Jesus and learning the commands of Jesus which were to be followed. Being a disciple also meant the continued presence of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).
- **Beginning of the new community of faith.** His disciples would form a new community of faith. Jesus intended that his followers would become the new community of God. When Jesus came preaching the kingdom, he was building on an Old Testament description of God's people. When he promised to build his church (assembly), he was describing a new community or gathering of God's people. The Jewish expectation of a coming Messianic kingdom provides background for Jesus' kingdom goal for his disciples. This goal of Jesus came to reality on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the church was established, bringing salvation in the name of Jesus and by his authority (Acts 4:12).

Jesus called his disciples together into the kingdom.

- **Universal kingdom.** Discipleship was not limited to Jews and good people. Jesus came accepting and calling sinners. Consider the calling of Matthew Levi, or the conversation with Zacchaeus. Jesus associated with the poor, outcast, and disenfranchised. The new faith community was to be universal. Answering Jesus' call was an acknowledgement of his authority.

- **Loyal to the King.** The new community was a kingdom community because it gave allegiance to the King. Jesus was king—remember the triumphal entry, the encounter with Pilate, and the accusation of the Jews written on the placard at the crucifixion.
- **Doing the King's work.** The new community honors the King by doing what he did. The new community commits to imitating Jesus, making more disciples, and being a genuine community where spiritual health and healing flow forth.

Jesus' works and words point to his authority. The new faith community made up of faithful, multiplying disciples is unique. The community is open to all, with free forgiveness of sins to all who come with faith in the Teacher. The assembled community accepts all who will come, lives in allegiance to the King, and is actively involved in doing the King's work.