

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-23 Sending the Twelve

One of the most exciting days in life is the day you start a new job. Perhaps you started helping your father or mother in the home or the field. Jesus started helping Joseph as he learned the trade of the carpenter. For some jobs there can be months or even years of ‘learning while doing.’ Finally, one day the young apprentice is given a task to complete by himself. He has learned; now he will be tested. Will his work honor the one who has taught him?

In previous lessons you learned that Jesus gathered around himself 12 men who each received the title of ‘apostle.’ This word means ‘someone who is sent on a mission.’ When Jesus first called them, his purpose was that they be with him to learn. He taught them to pray. He taught by example how the disciples were to treat women and children. They learned compassion as they saw Jesus reaching out to the poor, the sick, and the sinful. Now they were ready to receive authority from Jesus to preach and to drive out evil spirits. They were being sent, not only to proclaim the message of the Messiah, but also to demonstrate the power of his kingdom. In this lesson we find Jesus challenging the disciples to do something completely on their own.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, who was called Peter and his brother Andrew. Next were James and John, sons of Zebedee, followed by Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus. Simon the Zealot was a member of a Jewish rebel group attempting to overthrow the Roman rulers. Last was Judas Iscariot, the one who would betray Jesus.

These twelve Jesus now called together to give them authority to drive out impure spirits and heal every disease and sickness. He sent them out with these instructions:

Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go only to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. Do not take any money in your belts— no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.

Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave.... I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves (Matt 10:1-15).

Consider this last statement of Jesus again. What should the disciples expect since they are being sent like sheep among wolves? What should they be prepared to do in order to be like both snakes and doves?

Jesus thus sent out the disciples with a new apostolic mission. They were to share the news of the kingdom of God with Jewish people only. He encouraged the 12 to trust God for their needs on this trip. They were to find a person in each village that would take care of them while they ministered. They had the command to heal and deliver those oppressed, as they proclaimed the good news about Jesus.

Jesus warned them further,

Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues.... When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. ... Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it (Matt 10:17-22, 37-39).

Jesus was foretelling the persecution that will come as a result of the gospel. Some people would accept the message and others will not. If they rejected the truth, the disciples were to flee to another city. The gospel will divide some families as well as making others whole. Unbelievers will take Christ followers to court, beat them, and say they are following the devil. When this happens, the Spirit of God will give them the words to say. The one thing Christians must remember is that whoever disowns Christ before men will be disowned by Christ before the Father in heaven.

This prophecy was true for the original sent ones and is still true for those who go in Jesus' name today. "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called a devil, how much more the members of his household!" Jesus was saying that unbelievers will treat his followers the same way they treated him. We bear our cross, not to earn salvation, but as a testimony against them and their rebellion against the truth.

Then Jesus gives an important word, about not fearing man, but having a proper fear of God. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven (Matt 10: 28-32).

This story is **important** because it shows how the first disciples were sent out and empowered to share the gospel with their own people. When we proclaim the message of the Messiah in his Holy Spirit power, we should expect both victory and also persecution.

The **main truth** of this story is that as we go out in the name of Jesus, we are to both preach the kingdom of God and demonstrate its power over Satan and his works.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. To what people did Jesus tell the apostles to preach the first time he sent them out?
 - A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told them to go “only to the lost sheep of Israel,” you are correct.

2. What promise did Jesus make about the source of our response when we are persecuted?
 - A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told us our response would “not be you speaking, but the Spirit of God speaking through you,” you are correct.

3. What message did Jesus say the disciples should proclaim to the lost?
 - A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told the disciples to say, "The kingdom of heaven is near," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn this story so you can tell it from memory to someone who has never heard it. After telling them the story, ask them, “What does it mean when Jesus told the disciples to proclaim the kingdom of heaven?” The kingdom Jesus spoke of was one where peace, righteousness, and truth will rule people’s lives. Then ask, “Is that true of your life today? What can you do if this is not a reality for you?”