

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-34 Sending Out the 72

Were you ever given a job to do that you didn't feel prepared for? The key to success in such situations is the kind of instructions you receive. The more detailed the explanation, the more likely you will do the job well. Another key is whether the one giving the assignment trusts you. An explanation of the importance of your work encourages you to do it well. The final necessary piece is to have the authority of the one who gives you the task. Jesus sent out 72 disciples to prepare the way for him. He gave them clear instructions, trusted them, and delegated his authority to them.

The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go in Judea. (It is difficult to tell from early manuscripts whether this number is 72 or 70, but the exact number is not significant.) This was the same way he had sent the 12 around Galilee earlier—on an urgent mission. Now he needed more workers and he gave them similar instructions. He told them,

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse, bag or sandals; and do not be delayed by greeting anyone on the road.

When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house (Luke 10:2-7).

Jesus again was sending out disciples on a mission to preach the kingdom and deliver people from the power of Satan. Again he told them not to take anything with them, but to trust God for their provision and take up residence with one family in each town they entered. Jesus sent them into a large spiritual harvest field, a task too great for them ever to complete on their own. Therefore he told the disciples to pray for more workers for God's harvest. And he warned them it would not be an easy task. Jesus did not give many specific prayer requests, but this one was a very important one. As we pray for more workers, we need to be willing to be the answer to our own prayers. The plea for workers pours out from the very heart of God!

Jesus continued, "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ... Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:8-16).

When the message of the disciples was rejected, they were to give a visual and oral rebuke. They were to make clear the consequences of rejecting the messengers of the soon coming Messiah. Every Jew knew about Sodom, not only their sin, but also their quick and final destruction. The people who heard the message of Jesus and his disciples were even more accountable, because they had the gospel of the kingdom preached to them. The visual message was removing even the dust that collected on the messengers' feet. It was a symbolic act meaning these people were no better than Gentiles, the greatest insult possible for one Jew to give another.

Later, the 72 returned with great joy and excitement, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that evil spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Jesus' words could have several meanings. They may suggest Satan was suffering defeat as demons were driven out by the 72. In the context, Jesus may be saying Satan is losing control of this world to the kingdom of the Messiah. The snakes and scorpions mentioned may represent evil spirits, but the enemy is Satan himself.

Jesus told them not to rejoice because of their power over Satan, for this power was from their Master. They should instead rejoice that they knew God personally and have been rescued from the dominion of Satan. A person's salvation is more important than their power to overcome the evil one or escape his harm. Once a person accepts Christ, their name is written in heaven.

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Luke 10:21-24).

This story is **important** because it reminds us that the main assignment of each disciple is to proclaim the coming king and his kingdom to all people. We speak to all, knowing some will accept and others will reject the message.

The **main truth** of this story is that while God may do miracles through us to defeat Satan's power, the greatest work is inviting people to believe in Jesus, so that their names may be written in heaven.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Before Jesus sent out the 72, what did he ask the disciples to pray for?

- A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told them to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field, you are correct.
2. What two duties did Jesus say the 72 would perform during their ministry?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told them to heal the sick and proclaim that the kingdom of God had come near, you are correct.
3. What one truth should give the disciples their greatest joy?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told them to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to learn the story and tell it from memory to someone who has never heard it before. Then ask them, “What assignment do you think Jesus might be giving to you? Do you think you are ready for it? Discuss the reasons for their answers. Ask if they have received the baptism of the Spirit since they believed to empower them to do the task God has for them?”