

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy

Luke 10:1-24 and Matthew 11:20-24, 26-27

DIG: Why does Jesus send the talmidim out two-by-two? Why does He send them ahead of Him? How are believers today like a "worker in **the harvest**?" A **lamb among wolves**? What was the purpose of traveling light? What kind of household guests are they to be? Why? How are they to respond to the different towns they visit? What is their basic message? How does Luke 10:1-12 show the urgency of Messiah Himself senses for evangelism? What is the danger, and the reassurance of aligning oneself with Jesus Christ? What did the Seventy report when they returned? What did the Master say to them? Why is He joyful? Why did He say they were **blessed**?

REFLECT: How do you feel about **the harvest** where you live? Are people ripe for the Good News? What would it take for you to be more involved in **the harvest**? When have you felt like a **lamb among wolves**? What did you learn from that experience? What do these verses show you about the privileges you have in Yeshua Messiah? Do you know someone who is far from the Lord? It's never too late to pray for him or her.

After the festival of Booths, the Lord appointed seventy disciples (CJB). The apostles number twelve to correspond with the twelve tribes of Israel; this is made clear in Luke 22:30 (Matthew 19:28) and Revelation 21:12-14. These seventy correspond to the seventy elders Moshe appointed in the wilderness, who received the Ruach and prophesied (Numbers 11:16, 24-25). And it seems to be no mere coincidence that the Chief Shepherd consciously chose seventy to do what the seventy members of the Great Sanhedrin (see Lg - **The Great Sanhedrin**) had failed to do in preparing the people for the coming Messiah.

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus sent out messengers to **all the towns** in order to give people opportunities to accept **the Good News**. This mission is similar to that of the **Twelve** some months earlier. There, **Christ** had chosen twelve and sent them out by two's in an evangelistic campaign in Galilee (see Fk - **Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles**). The **Master** now employs the same method on a more intensive scale in Judea. The extreme hatred of His enemies called for a more rapid and intense work as He approached the City.

This episode falls into four parts, and each part answers the question, "Who recognizes, and therefore receives, the Kingdom of God?"

First, instructions were given. After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where he was about to go (Luke 10:1). Two witnesses were needed in order to bring condemnation (Deuteronomy 19:15; Numbers 35:30). Apparently the Twelve remained with Jesus and did not take part in this mission. 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** (Luke 10:2). This **harvest** is not to be confused with the final harvest at the end of the age, but refers to **the present harvest** of believers at that time (see Cb - **The Disciples Rejoin Jesus**). After the death of Yochanan the Baptizer, **the apostles and the seventy** took up the task of preparing the way for **Christ**.

The Lord warned them of the vicious reception **they** would receive. **Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.** They would need to trust Him for protection. **Do not take a money-belt, an extra pack or an extra pair of sandals; and don't stop to schmooze with people on the road** (Luke 10:3-4 CJB). The Yiddish word **schmooze** means *to chit-chat, to engage in idle conversation, or to gossip*. Oriental greetings were long and time-consuming, so they should be avoided. It comes from the Hebrew *shmu'ot*, meaning *things heard or rumors*. The point **Yeshua** made was that **the Seventy** were not to waste time **on the road** but to move along to **their** destination and get on with the ministry that **they** had been commissioned to do.

When you enter a house, first say, "Shalom!" to this household. If a seeker of shalom (a believer) is there, your "Shalom!" will find its rest with him; and if there isn't, it will return to you. The blessing of **shalom** will not be effective if faith is not present. **Stay in that same house, eating and drinking whatever they offer, for the worker deserves his wages - don't move around from house to house,** thus wasting time (Luke 10:5-7 CJB). Table fellowship had great symbolic significance in the first century, for such fellowship signified the acceptance of **God's people** (Acts 11:3; Galatians 2:12).

The message of truth is to be proclaimed whether it is **welcomed** or not. **When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you** (Luke 10:8). If the people of the town, whether Jews or Gentiles, received **them** with good will, **they** were to consider **themselves** members of the family, eating the things placed before **them**, putting aside all Jewish scruples. **Heal the sick who are there** (Luke 10:9a). During this apostolic age, **Jesus' talmidim**, and apparently **the seventy disciples**, were given healing powers similar to **the Master Himself**. These special powers were to confirm that **the Messiah** was indeed in **their** midst. As **the Lord** ascended to heaven after **His** resurrection and **the apostles** slowly passed away, so did these confirming signs. **The seventy healed as Jesus healed.** Although we have no specific details, we can be confident that **they healed** instantly, **healed** organic

diseases from birth, **healed** all who came to **them**, and, like **the Twelve**, raised the dead (Acts 9:36-42, 20:9-12).

And tell them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." This is the local nearness of a present reality, not the chronological nearness of a future reality. **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"** (Luke 10:9b-11). Why should people uninterested in the Gospel and unreceptive to it be evangelized? Because the message itself is powerful, since it comes from **ADONAI**; it may cause them to change their minds. It is important to notice that **the seventy** were not to be passive to any opposition, but to confront and condemn it.

The somber act should be followed up by an equally somber declaration: **I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Sodom than for that town** (Luke 10:12; Matthew 11:24). They did not respond even though they saw the miracles. As stated above in **Luke 10:9a**, the purpose of our **Lord's** miracles was to serve as signs to Isra'el to authenticate that **He** was indeed **the Messiah**. While all unbelievers will end up in **the lake of fire** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fm - Satan Will Be Released from His Prison and Will Go Out to Deceive the Nations**), there will be degrees of punishment in **Hell**.

For both believers and unbelievers, the principle seems to be, the greater the knowledge, the greater the responsibility. And, for unbelievers, the greater will the punishment be if a person fails to meet their responsibility. It may well be that the different stages of punishment in **Sh'ol** are not so much a matter of objective circumstances as of subjective awareness of the pain and separation from **God**. To some extent, the different degrees of punishment reflect the fact that unrepentant sinners will be given over to the evil desires of their hearts. The misery they will experience from having to live with their own wickedness eternally will be proportionate to the degree of awareness of precisely what they were doing when they chose evil. However, for both believers and unbelievers alike, these are the implications of our final state:

1. The decisions that we make in this life will govern our future condition, not merely for a period of time, but for all eternity (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). Therefore, we should exercise extraordinary care and diligence as we make them.
2. The conditions of this life, as Rabbi Sha'ul put it, are transitory. They fade into relative insignificance when compared with the eternity to come.

3. The nature of our final state is far more intense than anything known in this life. The images used to depict them are quite inadequate to fully convey what lies ahead. Heaven, for example, will far exceed any joy that we have known here, as will the anguish of **hell**.
4. The bliss of heaven ought not to be thought of as simply an intensification of pleasures of this life. The primary dimension of heaven is the presence of the believer with **God**.
5. **Sh'ol** is not only a place of physical suffering, but even more so the awful loneliness of total and final separation from our **Lord**.
6. **Hell** should not be thought of primarily as punishment visited upon unbelievers by a vindictive **God**, but as the natural consequence of the sinful life *chosen* by those who reject **Yeshua ha-Mashiach**.
7. There will also be degrees of reward for those in heaven (**Daniel 12:3; Luke 19:11-27; First Corinthians 3:14-15**; see my commentary on **Revelation Cc - For We Must All Appear Before the Judgment Seat of Christ**).

Second, woes were pronounced on the rejecting towns. Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. Then comes perhaps the most convincing statement - that **if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in the Gentile areas of Tyre and Sidon, two most wicked Gentile cities, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Luke 10:13; Mattityahu 11:20-21).** The wickedness of **Tyre and Sidon** and the predictions of judgment against them are detailed in the TaNaKh (see my commentary on **Isaiah Er - Wail, You Ships of Tarshish; Your Fortress is Destroyed**). **Sackcloth and ashes** refers to the ancient Near Eastern customs associated with grief and mourning (**Jonah 3:6; Daniel 9:3; Esther 4:3**). Since **Philip, Andrew** and **Simon Peter** were from **Bethsaida**, there was ample opportunity to hear and understand the messianic claims of **Yeshua (John 1:44)**.

But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you (Luke 10:14; Matthew 11:22). It is obvious from what **Jesus** says here that **He** had been to **Chorazin** many times since the majority of **His miracles** were done in the other two cities. At the end of **his Gospel**, **John** said that it was impossible to write down all that **Christ** did. Thus, the **Gospel** writers had to be selective in what they wrote. **Chorazin** is an example of material that was omitted under the inspiration of **the Holy Spirit**.

And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Sh'ol (Luke 10:15; Mattityahu 11:23 and also see Ee - **Come to Me, All Who are Weary and Burdened, I Will Give You Rest**). Usually brought into English as **Sh'ol**; the Greek is translated **Hades**, the dwelling place of the dead. In the TaNaKh **Sh'ol** is a dim vague state where dead souls wait. Most often, English versions use the word **Hell**.

Any city that rejected the message of **the seventy-two** would suffer the same dreadful fate as the ones mentioned above. Therefore, **Messiah** consoled **the men** whom **He** was sending out by revealing that the **rejection** they would experience was not a **rejection** of **them** - but a **rejection** of **Him**! The failure these **men** would experience could easily discourage them. But **Yeshua** said that when **they** faced failure, it was because the nation was not willing to receive **Him** (Luke 10:16). **Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me (Yeshua); but whoever rejects Me rejects Him who sent me (ADONAI)**. Thus, as **the Lord** sent **the seventy** out, **He** told **them** that even though **the harvest** was plentiful, the response to **their** ministry would be limited and **they** must anticipate the same **rejection** that **He** had experienced.

Third, victory was proclaimed and the meaning of the mission defined. After completing the ministry entrusted to **them**, **the seventy** returned to report to **Christ**. However, **they** seem to have been preoccupied with the **miracles** they had performed. **They** returned with joy and said: **Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name (Luke 10:17)**. **They** made no report on the response of the people to **their** ministry, but reported on the response of **the demons** to the **authority** that **the Master** had entrusted to **them**. Therefore, it was necessary for **the Savior of sinners** to rebuke **them**.

Jesus reminded **them** that the authority was not **theirs**. It was **His**. **He** had conferred it on **them**. **And to overcome all the power of the enemy, the Adversary; nothing will harm you.** The **authority** belonged to **Him** because **He** had expelled **the deceiver from heaven** at the time of **his** original fall. **He** replied: **I saw Satan fall, defeated, like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18-19b; also see Ezekiel 28:12-17 and Isaiah 14:12-15)**. So **Jesus** was not speaking of **the great dragon** being thrown out of **heaven** at that particular moment, but that **his** power had been broken and that **he** was subject to **Christ's authority**.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions (Luke 10:19a). These were both symbols for evil. The perfect tense of the verb **have given you authority** refers to the **authority** already given to **the apostles (Luke 9:1)**, not to some future **authority** such as in **Acts 1:8**. This is a preview of the messianic Kingdom that accompanies **Christ's** return in glory to the earth. **The infant will play on a cobra's hole, and will put his hand in a viper's nest (Isaiah 11:8 CJB)**.

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Judaism features prominently the idea that the names of the forgiven are recorded in heaven. The liturgy for Rosh-HaShanah (the Jewish New Year) includes a prayer for being written in the book of life, and the Yom-Kippur (the Day of Atonement) liturgy nine days later has a prayer for being "sealed" in the book of life, the idea being that the decision is made final on that day. Daniel 12:1 tells us that everyone whose name is found written in the book of life - will be delivered. And Jesus declares: **The one who overcomes will be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that such a one before My Father and His angels (Revelation 3:5).** Our personal relationship with ADONAI should be the cause of our joy.

Fourth, the Son of God prays to the Father. It is not recorded, but the seventy must have then reported on the harvest that had been gathered. There were those who had accepted their message and put their faith in the Savior. And for this response, Christ offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father. This points to the fact that our Lord trusted in the Father's plan even when things didn't seem to be falling into place as the nation of Isra'el had already rejected Him (see Eh - **Jesus is Officially Rejected by the Sanhedrin**). At that time Jesus said: **I praise you, Father, ADONAI of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Ha'Shem** is sovereign over all, and nothing, not even rejection by the people of Isra'el, will frustrate His ultimate plans of messianic redemption. Those who think of themselves as wise, they did not see the truth because of their depravity; but the righteous of the TaNaKh who had the faith of little children saw the light. Because they opened hearts to the things of God they were able to receive redemption through Christ. **Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do (Luke 10:21; Matthew 11:25-26).**

All things have been committed to Me by my Father. His own divine origin is emphasized by Yeshua Himself when He said: **No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him (Luke 10:22; Mattityahu 11:27).** From statements like these, it is clear that we cannot merely accept Christ as merely a good rabbi or even a great prophet. He claims to have a unique knowledge of the God of Isra'el because He Himself was in the presence of the Father from all eternity past. Philosophy and religion are utterly incapable of reasoning out God or His truth because they are a finite, lower order. Human ideas and concepts are earthbound and totally useless in producing spiritual fruit or guidance. God must break into the darkness and emptiness of human understanding because before being adopted into His family, we are spiritually dead (see Bw - **What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**).

Then He turned to His talmidim and said privately: **Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.** Those who had put their faith in Him had **seen** Him as the **Messiah**. **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 10:23-24).** They had **seen** and believed **the One** of whom **the prophets** spoke and longed to **see**. Such a privilege as they had was not given to **the prophets**.

The Adversary, that **ancient Serpent**, is the god of this age (**Second Corinthians 4:4**). Nevertheless, as **King Belshazzar's** guests continued to feast unaware that **his** kingdom had fallen and **his** doom had been sealed (**Daniel 5:1-30**), so the present age is unaware that the reign of **the Enemy of souls** is broken. It sees only some **writing on the wall**, but it cannot read what it sees. Here, the mission of **the seventy disciples** is the continuing task of the Church. As **the Living Word** empowered **His ambassadors** then, **He** empowers us today: **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us (Second Corinthians 5:20a).**

We have two tasks. First, to make **the Kingdom** real for those we come into contact with. You may be the only "Jesus" they will ever meet. As it was in the days of **Messiah's** First Coming, **His** presence was veiled. Today, it is **the writing on the wall**, occurring only as **the Ruach HaKodesh** actualizes it. What we see today is only a small foretaste of **the** glorious messianic **Kingdom** to come. Make **Him** real to others. Therefore, believers, like **Daniel** and **the seventy disciples**, must explain the meaning of **the writing on the wall**, proclaiming: **The kingdom of God has come near to you (Luke 10:9b).**⁹⁸⁵