

Commissioning of the Seventy- Luke 10:1-16

Bock does a good job outlining this section:

This large, significant unit describes the second mission of Jesus' disciples. Rather than sending out only the Twelve (Luke 9:1–6), Jesus sends out a larger group. The passage is composed of several subunits: instruction about the mission proper (10:1–12), woes on unresponsive cities (10:13–16), the report and return of the disciples (10:17–20), and Jesus' thanksgiving and blessing for them (10:21–24). The unit's size reveals its importance.

Jesus has journeyed through a Samaritan village and faced rejection. He has explained that discipleship entails some rejection and involves separation from old priorities and intimate ties. Now He will send out the disciples, not with a mood of gloom, but of excitement, authority, revelation, and opportunity (Tannehill 1986:232). (Bock, 986).

Instruction about the Mission Proper (10:1–12)

10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

The sending of seventy true disciples follows immediately after Jesus' challenge to the three would-be disciples (Lk. 9:57-62). The Seventy represent those who were willing to deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Jesus (Lk. 9:23). This also reminds us that Jesus traveled with a much larger band of men than just the Twelve; if seventy were qualified to be sent by Christ, it is safe to assume that there were many more than that who traveled with Him.

Jesus wanted to spend the remaining months of His life going from town to town and village to village, and He wanted the people in them to be prepared for Him when He arrived. So, in addition to the Twelve, the Lord appointed 70 others (some manuscripts say seventy-two) to proclaim the kingdom (10:11). Such a large group of forerunners shows that He had a busy itinerary ahead of Him (Morris, 198).

Jesus sent them out in pairs. This not only proved a measure of safety, Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor; if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion, but woe to the one who falls when there's not another to lift him up." In addition, Deuteronomy 19:15 states that a testimony is validated by two or three witnesses.

The Seventy were missionaries, appointed by Jesus and given authority over demons (10:17) and disease (10:9) like the Twelve. They were also given the same specific instructions as the Twelve (compare 10:4-11 to 9:3-5). But they weren't *apostles*.

10:2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

The illustration of a harvest and laborers was used by Jesus on a number of occasions to refer to evangelism (Matt. 9:37-38; Jn. 4:35). However, harvesting was also commonly used in the Bible as a metaphor for judgment. Joel 3:13 reads, "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great." Likewise, Revelation 14:14-16 says, "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. (15) And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.' (16) Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. . . . (19) So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. (20) And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles." The coming harvest of judgment makes the work of the Seventy in reaching people with the gospel all the more urgent.

Jesus told them to proclaim, "the kingdom of God has come near to you" (10:9) and to pray, but it should be noted what He told them to pray for. He didn't tell them to pray for people to respond to the gospel; Jesus said the harvest was plentiful, there was much work to do. The need was for more laborers. Since the Lord of the harvest is the one who sends laborers into the field, prayer was a necessity; to successfully reap the abundant harvest the laborers should ask God to send more laborers to join them. The high Christology in this passage should not be missed. In 10:1, Jesus is the one addressed as "Lord," and it is He who is sending laborers into the harvest field.

10:3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

All of Christ's disciples in every age are vulnerable; they are like lambs among wolves; they are in some sense at the mercy of the world. In Matthew 10:16-18 Jesus said, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." "Wolves" will come in the form of both secular government and religions. Both will oppose those who proclaim Christ. In Matthew 10:22 Jesus said, "You will be hated *by all* because of My name."

The call to follow Jesus demands the highest possible level of commitment. It involves both great joys and great trials.

10:4 "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

10:5 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'

10:6 "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

10:7 "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

10:8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

10:9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

When addressing the apostles in Luke 9, Jesus gave almost identical instructions; He said, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." (Luke 9:3-5).

The seventy missionaries, like all who serve Christ, needed to take care lest they became distracted by excessive planning or concern for provisions. They needed to simply focus on their task. This is probably what Jesus was emphasizing when He told the Seventy to "greet no one on the way." This is not a command that forbids greeting people; it is emphasizing the need of not being distracted en route to their destination. Jesus' mission was that they reach every city He wanted to visit (10:1); people and personal concerns could easily become a hindrance to achieving the real goal.

Verses 5-9 explain what the disciples needed to do when they entered a town. First, they were to pronounce a blessing upon the house that shows them hospitality in lodging. "Peace be to this house" (10:5) is equivalent to the Hebrew "Shalom." The blessing of the *house* is a blessing for the people in it; however, benefiting from the blessing was dependent upon how it is received (10:6). If the person of the house received Christ's missionaries as messengers from God, then the peace of God would rest upon them. If the people in the house refused to give them hospitality, then God's blessing would not be upon them; it would "return" to the missionaries (it would not come to pass).

Since a laborer is worthy of wages, hospitality in the form of food and shelter was to be accepted as "pay" for their work (10:7). They were not to feel shame for receiving food and shelter for free.

Jesus also insisted that they be content with their accommodations, not moving from house to house (10:7). Concern about personal comforts or socializing could also become a hindrance. Their mission was to preach the gospel, not spend their energies with personal wellbeing or social activities. They were to graciously receive whatever was given (10:8). It is not known whether Jesus was suggesting that they ignore the Jewish dietary restrictions, or not.

As they traveled, the missionaries were to say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (10:9, 11). Similar expressions are found elsewhere from the mouth of Jesus. In Luke 17:21 Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is *in your midst*;" Matthew 4:17 says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*;" in Luke 11:20 Jesus said, "the kingdom of God *has come upon you*." All of these express the same idea. The kingdom of God is accessible. "It is here." When the King is present, the kingdom is present with Him.

A kingdom is a domain ruled by a single monarch who has absolute sovereignty, who functions with unilateral authority, whose will is non-contradictable, authoritative, and absolute. This is true of the kingdom of God, as well. In Luke 11:14-23 it becomes clear that power over demons and sickness were displays of the King's authoritative rule over the present world order. They demonstrated that the kingdom of God was breaking into the world of men.

Bock, in his commentary on Luke (pages 1000-1001), does an excellent job explaining the stages of the kingdom's development. He says:

This is not to say that everything associated with the kingdom has come. It has only begun. Luke 24:49 speaks of the coming of the Father's promise, Acts 2 declares the promised Spirit's arrival as a fresh fulfillment of promises made to David, and Acts 3:18–24 shows that some events are still expected in association with God's kingdom program. Jesus' point in Luke 10:9 is that the kingdom program has begun to demonstrate the initial phases of fulfillment. In a confirmation of this inauguration picture, in 10:17–18 Satan is seen falling from heaven as a result of the mission's healing ministry (Ladd 1974a:256-257). A key characteristic of *this phase* of the kingdom is its function as "rule" – the exercise of God's saving power upon humans in the face of opposing forces. *This is not to say that the idea of a realm, which is the OT emphasis, is now lost to the kingdom idea (pace Ladd).* "Sons of peace" are being discovered in the mission. Again, Acts 3:18–24 looks to a day when Jesus will return and physically demonstrate that rule in accordance with all that the OT prophets promised. Thus, Luke's view of the kingdom is rich and complex, being laid out in clear stages.

The kingdom comes in distinct yet related stages. The central images of Satan's fall (Luke 10:18) and the disciples' healing show that the kingdom is near. Such healing recalls 4:16–18 and anticipates 11:14–23. The kingdom arrives with Jesus, and the reality of its arrival is reflected in these events of power. However, the kingdom's more lasting personal benefits are really inaugurated with the bestowal of the Spirit promised by the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:16-36). Jesus calls this hope of God's rule and the presence of its blessing the "gospel of the kingdom" (4:16–30, 43). Nothing can stop the kingdom from coming. Jesus' ministry is the transition into its arrival. The king is here, and images of his power are present. It is time to respond and enter in.

Matthew 10:7–8 is similar except that the order of healing and kingdom declaration is reversed. Matthew also has more detail, since he speaks of dead people raised, lepers cleansed, and demons cast out – which sounds like parts of Luke 7:22 (Fitzmyer 1985:848). In addition, Matthew lacks the phrase, "upon you" (ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, *eph' hymas*). Again, each is saying similar things, because similar things happened in the two missions.

10:10 "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 10:11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

10:12 "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

The proclamation of the gospel requires an attitude of compassion, prayer, and trust (10:1-4). It involves the proclamation of the kingdom of God. However, it also has consequences for the hearers.

If the gospel was rejected, the missionaries were to declare their relationship to that city by shaking the dust off their feet; that was to be a sign and a public warning of God's displeasure. At the same time, they were to proclaim once more that the kingdom of God has come near (10:11). That reality had not changed.

Sodom had the reputation of being one of the most despicable of ancient Gentile cities, and became a symbol of unrighteousness. In Genesis 18:20 the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and *their sin is exceedingly grave.*" Their sin was homosexual passion that was taken to the extreme. God had sent angels to warn Lot that God was going to judge the city. When the men who lived in Sodom saw the angels (who looked like men), it excited their perverted passions so that they went to Lot's house to rape them. God then struck them with blindness so that they could not find the door; however, even that didn't stop them. The Bible says that they wearied themselves trying to find the door to get in (Gen. 19). In the OT, homosexuality was one of the sins punishable by death (see list below), placing it in the category of one of the most serious sins that could be committed. As a result, Jews saw Sodom as one of the most wretched cities imaginable. In the end, God drowned that city in fire and brimstone.

"That day" in verse 12 is not explained, but it is clearly "the judgment" in verse 14. For Jesus to say that in the Day of Judgment the city that rejects the kingdom message would be judged more severely than Sodom was unthinkable to a Jew. The Jews saw themselves as God's covenant people, as the ones who worshiped the true God. And yet, according to Jesus, Sodom would fare better than them in the Judgment.

Woes on Unresponsive Cities (10:13–16)

10:13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

10:14 "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.

Mention of those who might reject Jesus naturally leads to the mention of those who had already done so (Morris, 200).

"Woe" is not as much a threat as it is an expression of regret (Morris, 201). Chorazin and Bethsaida are two cities located in Galilee near Capernaum. Although the Gospels do not record Jesus' ministry in these cities, it is apparent that He had ministered in them quite extensively and had probably performed a substantial number of miracles. Their faithless response to Jesus earned them the right to be compared unfavorably with two unrighteous OT cities, Tyre and Sidon – cities that in the OT had sinned grievously against God and had consequently experienced God's judgment (Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 25:22; 47:4; Ez. 26:1–28:24; Joel 4:4–8; Amos 1:9–10). Had Tyre and Sidon received the same amount of light that Chorazin and Bethsaida had, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes (a familiar act of contrition). Since Chorazin and Bethsaida remained obstinately settled in their rebellion, it puts them as objects of God's wrath. In comparison, judgment would be less severe for Tyre and Sidon. Jesus makes it clear that rejecting Him and his message is far more serious than any other sin.

10:15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!

10:16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

In verse 15, Jesus turns His attention to Capernaum. This was the city that served as the center of Jesus' Galilean ministry. In fact, He had been there so much that Matthew calls it His own city (Matt. 9:1). In Luke 4:31-41 Jesus had performed many mighty works, but they didn't do Capernaum much good, since they did not repent (Garland, 428). Matthew's parallel account also adds that if the miracles that were done in Capernaum were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented (Matt. 11:21, 22). So Capernaum bears the same culpability as Chorazin and Bethsaida.

The people there had thought well of themselves and assumed they were destined for heaven, but Jesus said they would be brought down to Hades.

Hades is the underworld, the realm of the dead, the grave (Gen. 42:38). Etymologically, it means the "unseen" (land), the "invisible" (world), and is conceived of as being far under the ground (Job 11:8; Psa. 139:8; Amos 9:2). Hades (or, its OT equivalent "sheol") can simply refer to the state of death without any negative connotations (Rev. 1:18). Since both believers and unbelievers die, both can be said to go to Hades (i.e. the grave; I Sam. 2:6; Psa. 89:48). However, it can also be described as a place of torment (Matt. 5:22; Lk. 16:23). In Luke 10:15, Jesus appears to be using heaven as the height of glory, and Hades as the depth of degradation (Morris, 201).

Verses 12-16 are very instructive about the nature of judgment:

First, these verses teach that there will be a judgement where all will be held accountable for what they have done (Psa. 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 25:14; Matt. 16:27; Jo. 5:29; Ro. 2:5-9; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23; 20:12-13). Judgment will include outward behavior and what people say (Matt. 12:36), as well as things done in secret (II Cor. 4:2; Eph. 5:12) and what people think (Ro. 2:16; Heb. 4:12). Because God judges according to truth (Ro. 2:2), He includes the motive behind the action as well as the action itself.

Secondly, those who have received greater revelation will be judged more severely if that revelation is rejected (Lk. 10:12-14; Matt. 11:21-24; Ro. 2:12-16). This is the point of Luke 10:14 when Jesus said, "it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment." "More tolerable" (Lk. 10:12, 14) is a comparison; it means that God will see Tyre and Sidon as deserving less punishment than Chorazin and Bethsaida. In other words, because Chorazin and Bethsaida were exposed to greater light through the proclamation of the gospel, the level of their culpability and guilt is higher than that of Tyre and Sidon. If some are judged more severely than others, it also means that there are degrees of punishment.

Lastly, each individual will be judged as an individual. In 10:16 Jesus said, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." In verses 12-15, Jesus had been denouncing cities and towns, but in verse 16 He personalizes it and addresses the individual. Jesus' rejection by towns is really rejection by the individuals in the towns. The parable of the vineyard in Luke 20:9-17 illustrates the disaster that will befall those who reject the Son.

When the gospel is preached there will be people who listen with faith and repent and believe, and there will be those who do not. But it is interesting to note that those who hear Jesus' disciples are actually hearing Jesus. Jesus said, "the one who listens to you listens to Me." This puts great responsibility on all who hear the message (Morris, 102). In other words, when people speak the gospel,

it's the Lord speaking through them. When people hear, they're hearing Jesus. Likewise, rejection of the gospel is not really the rejection of the person proclaiming it; it's rejection of Jesus.

The Jews thought that they could be faithful to God and reject Jesus but nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus was sent by God. He revealed God. He was God in human flesh. In Luke 10:16 Jesus said, "he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." In John 5:23 He said, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him;" and "If God were your Father, you would love Me" (John 8:42). The apostle John states in 1 John 2:23, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also." In 2 John 9 he declares, "Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God." The one who receives the gospel, receives Christ. The one who receives Christ, receives God. The one who rejects the gospel, rejects Christ and rejects God. Nothing could be more serious than that. This is the personalization of this passage. It comes down to what an individual does with the gospel.

NOTE: Sins that were capital offenses in the Old Testament: Edited from "Capital Punishment and the Bible" by Dave Miller (<http://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=7&article=683>). I have provided this list simply to illustrate that homosexuality is one among many sins that was punishable as a capital crime. In today's society Christians are accused of being homophobic. However, rejecting homosexuality is simply agreeing with the Bible's assessment of the behavior. There are many things that the Bible condemns that the world approves of. Homosexuality is one of them.

1. Under the law of Moses, the death penalty was required in cases of **premeditated murder** (Exodus 21:12-14, 22-23; Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21). This regulation even included the situation in which two men might be fighting and, in the process, cause the death of an innocent bystander or her unborn infant. It did not include accidental homicide, which we call "manslaughter."
2. **Kidnapping** was a capital crime under the Old Testament (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7).
3. A person could be put to death for **striking or cursing his parents** (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9). Jesus alluded to this point in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10.
4. **Incorrigible rebelliousness** was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 17:12). For example, a stubborn, disobedient, rebellious son who would not submit to parents or civil authorities was to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The next six capital crimes can be identified as more specifically pertaining to religious matters.

5. **Sacrificing to false gods** was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:20).
6. **Violating the Sabbath** brought the death penalty (Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36).
7. **Blasphemy**, or cursing God, warranted the death penalty (Leviticus 24:10-16,23).

8. The **false prophet**, specifically one who tried to entice the people to idolatry, was to be executed (Deuteronomy 13:1-11), as were the people who were so influenced (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).

9. **Human sacrifice** was a capital crime (Leviticus 20:2). The Israelites were tempted to offer their children to false pagan deities, like Molech. But such was despicable to God.

10. **Divination**, or the dabbling in the magical arts, was a capital crime. Consequently, under Mosaic law, witches, sorcerers, wizards, mediums, charmers, soothsayers, diviners, spiritists, and enchanters were to be put to death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

The next six crimes pertain to sexual matters.

11. **Adultery** was punishable by death under the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22).

12. **Bestiality**, i.e., having sexual relations with an animal, was punishable by death (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15-16).

13. **Incest** was a capital offense in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:6-17; 20:11-12,14).

14. **Homosexuality** was a capital crime (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

15. **Premarital sex** brought the death penalty (Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

16. **Rape** of an engaged or married woman was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:25-27).

Capital punishment was written into God's will for the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. The death penalty was a viable form of punishment for at least sixteen separate offenses. Some people have misunderstood one of the Ten Commandments which says, "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). They have assumed that the law forbade taking human life under any circumstances. But God required the death penalty for some sixteen crimes. Therefore, the commandment would have been better translated, "You shall not murder." In other words, the command was a prohibition against an individual taking the law into his own hands and exercising personal vengeance. But God wanted the execution of lawbreakers to be carried out by duly constituted legal authorities.