

As the Messiah, the King Who will reign over the entire world, Jesus sends out His twelve disciples to represent Him throughout Israel. They are to preach the coming of the Messiah's kingdom and demonstrate His power by healing the sick and casting out demonic spirits. Jesus is giving the Jews the opportunity to recognize Him as their King but unfortunately they will reject Him.

¹ And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Jesus calls His twelve specially chosen disciples together and entrusts them with a great gift: the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal those who were sick or with disease. We have no evidence that they had been able to do these things before this time and they were only able to do this once Jesus had given them the power. In the NT there are two main words translated "power" (there are other words used, but most are variations of the meanings of these two): (1) *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is) and (2) *exousia* (ex-oo-see'-ah). *Dunamis* refers to the actual strength and ability to do something. *Exousia*, which is the word used in this verse, refers to the authority to have something done. It appears that Jesus gave both types of power to the disciples, however, because Luke tells us that Jesus "gave them power [*dunamis*] and authority [*exousia*] over all devils, and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1). This power and authority was given specifically to the disciples to aid them in the task of preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Anyone who claims to have this power and authority today is likely claiming something that they do not possess. Luke gives us an example of people attempting to cast out demonic spirits without being given the power and authority of Jesus Christ in Acts 19:13-16.

² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

We are given the full list of these twelve disciples which are now called apostles. A disciple is a "learner" while an apostle is "one who is sent," terms reflecting their role. These twelve will be with Jesus during the bulk of His earthly ministry and after the crucifixion they will be sent out to testify of His teachings and, most importantly, of His death, burial and resurrection. The last one in the list (Judas Iscariot) is identified as the one who will betray Jesus and will be replaced after Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:15-26). It's worth noting that even Judas Iscariot was apparently given the same authority over demonic spirits and disease as the other disciples even though Jesus knew he was a devil and would betray Him (John 6:70).

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth" – Mark tells us that Jesus sent them out in pairs (Mark 6:7).

"and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" – Jesus is very specific about the area of ministry He intends for the apostles. They are not to go to any non-Jewish regions – not to Gentiles or to the Samaritans (who were Jews that had intermarried with Gentiles). Instead, they are to limit their ministry to those of pure Jewish descent only. Why would Jesus not want them to preach to as many people as possible? The answer can be found in the message that Jesus tells them to preach.

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" – They are to preach the same message that John the Baptist and Jesus have already been preaching: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The millennial kingdom on this earth will be that of Jesus Christ ruling over the Jews, a kingdom that will cover the entire earth and encompass the Gentile nations. When this kingdom would start depended on Israel's acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah, thus the ministry of Jesus and His apostles while He was on this earth was primarily to the Jews with the intent of preparing them for the kingdom. This focus on the Jews and the kingdom is likely the reason the disciples ask Jesus this question after the resurrection: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6b).

⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

As they go from city to city, they are to exercise the authority Jesus has given them to demonstrate the validity of Jesus' claim as the Messiah by healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out devils. This authority that Jesus gave to the disciples did not cost them anything, and neither should they charge a price of those to whom they will minister. They are not to use the power that Jesus gave them to get rich or to make a name for themselves. Instead, they should freely use what Jesus has given them to help other people and to preach the gospel of the kingdom. We should use the gifts that God has given us to glorify Jesus Christ rather than ourselves. Too many Christians today are prioritizing music and book sales or personal fame above reaching the lost with the gospel.

⁹ Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, ¹⁰ Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Not only are they to minister without charging for their "services" but Jesus adds that they should not take money with them to finance their journey. They were not even to carry a "scrip" (a wallet for carrying money or other provisions) with them to accumulate money. They also were not to bring spare clothes, shoes, or walking sticks on their journey. They were to trust that God would provide for them each day what they needed as they did the work to which He had called them. God would reward their faithfulness as His workmen and provide for their daily needs.

¹¹ And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. ¹² And when ye come into an house, salute it. ¹³ And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

“And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy” – They were to find out who would welcome their message and would thus show hospitality to an apostle of Jesus. There were many Jews in Israel who were waiting for the kingdom of God and would welcome the message the apostles were preaching.

“and there abide till ye go thence” – This command is in contrast to the practice of religious philosophers of the day who would go from house to house begging. The apostles were not to go from house to house looking for a more generous host. Instead, they were to be satisfied with what God provided through the household that initially welcomed them.

“And when ye come into an house, salute it” – When they came in as guests into a house, they are to greet the occupants in the name of the Lord and bestow the blessings of God upon it.

“And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it” – If the household welcomes them then they should ask God to bless that household.

“but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you” – On the other hand, if the household decides that they do not approve of the apostles’ message then they should revoke the blessings of God on that household.

¹⁴ And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. ¹⁵ Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet” – Jesus gives instructions to follow as they are leaving a house or city if the apostles and their message have been rejected. Jesus is likely speaking of the leadership of a city or a household since it’s highly unlikely that every single citizen of a city would reject them. There were many Jews in Israel that believed in Jesus as the Messiah and yet the Jewish leaders, as representatives of the people, rejected and crucified Him. The apostles are instructed to shake the dust off of their feet when leaving a house or city that has rejected their message “for a testimony against them” (Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5). It was common in that day for Jews to shake the dust off their feet when returning from Gentile regions as an expression of disdain. Just as the Jews showed contempt toward Gentiles so that they did not even want “Gentile dust” clinging to their feet, so the apostles were to express the same attitude toward those who had rejected God’s message of the kingdom.

“Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable [bearable] for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city” – The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha were well known to the Jews as being exceedingly sinful (**Gen. 13:13** “*But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly*”). God poured out a punishment of fire and brimstone on these cities and the surrounding area as a temporal judgment. However, these people still have yet to stand before God at the White Throne Judgment to be judged according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15). Jesus chose to use these people to illustrate how serious it is to reject the kingdom of God, especially considering that it was “at hand” and that the Messiah was there. The day of judgment will be easier for the people of Sodom and Gomorrha than it will be for the households and cities that reject the gospel of the kingdom.

¹⁶ Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” – Jesus uses the picture of defenseless sheep surrounded by a pack of wolves. Jesus knows that the world hated Him and that it will hate them as well (John 15:18 “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*”). He is sending them out into the world without any traditional means of defending themselves (armies, weapons, laws, etc.) because they are restrained by truth and love. The world, however, will not exercise any such restraints and so the apostles will be at a disadvantage in an earthly sense. Despite the danger, Jesus is still sending His apostles out because of the necessity that the message of the gospel be preached. The payoff will outweigh the dangers because souls will be born into the kingdom. In the following verses (vs. 17-25) Jesus continues by describing how that they will be persecuted for His sake.

“be ye therefore wise as serpents” – Snakes have the reputation of being clever at avoiding danger. Since the apostles will not be allowed to defend themselves through aggressive or violent means, Jesus advises them to be smart in the way they operate in order to avoid the dangers presented by the persecutions of the world. They are not to unnecessarily walk into danger while remaining faithful to Christ.

“and harmless [innocent] as doves” – The apostles are to remain [as innocent and pure as a dove in their actions. They are not to avenge themselves or seek to harm those who are persecuting them. They are not to compromise their own purity and faithfulness to Christ in an effort to protect or defend themselves.

Verses 17-25: Jesus warns the apostles that they will be brought before various authorities, both Jewish and Gentile, to answer for and to be punished for preaching in His name. However, He encourages them that the Holy Spirit will be with them to help them know what to say at those times. He also warns them that they will be betrayed by family and friends for His sake and that they should expect no better treatment than what He will receive from the Jews.

Verses 26-42: Jesus encourages them not to fear because they will have truth on their side. The persecutors can only kill their bodies but their souls will be eternally with Christ. He then talks about the cost of following Him and that He requires us to love Him above even our own parents if they were to disown or persecute us because of Jesus Christ.