

After giving His disciples the authority to heal the sick and cast out demonic spirits, Jesus sends His disciples throughout Israel to preach the message of the kingdom, healing and casting out demonic spirits as they went. After Jesus' resurrection, this assignment will become their lifelong occupation as witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

**Verses 1-6:** Jesus returns to "his own country" (his home town of Nazareth) accompanied by His disciples and begins teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath. However, these people had seen Jesus grow up and were surprised to hear His teaching and see the miracles that He performed. They became "offended" (the Greek word means "to stumble") at Him because they could not believe that this One Whom they had seen grow up could do such great things. Jesus commented on the situation by saying that "a prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (v. 4) and He could not perform many miracles due to their unbelief (v. 5-6).

---

7 And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

**"And he called *unto him* the twelve"** – These are the twelve disciples that He chose back in chapter 3: **Mark 3:14-15** "*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:*" Jesus chose them in chapter 3 for the purpose for which He was now sending them out.

**"and began to send them forth by two and two"** – Even though Jesus was the Son of God, at that time He was in a human body with human limitations. Since He could not cover the land of Israel by Himself, He sent the disciples out in pairs as His representatives to preach the gospel of the kingdom to Israel (**Matt. 10:5-7** "*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: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand*"). This assignment likely also served as training for the disciples for when they would be assigned the task of being witnesses of the risen Christ later after His resurrection (**Acts 1:8** "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*"). The word "apostle" means "one sent forth; messenger; delegate." The practice of sending messengers out in pairs had the benefit of the two assisting one another and mutual encouragement. It also met the requirement for an authentic testimony under the Mosaic Law (**Deut. 19:15** "*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.*").

**"and gave them power [authority] over unclean spirits"** – Although not specifically mentioned here, Jesus also gave them the power to heal the sick, as stated earlier in Mark, and in the other synoptic gospels (Mark 3:14-15; Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1). The Greek word "power" refers to authority and it applied to their ability to heal as well. The disciples did not possess the miraculous power within themselves to heal or to cast out demonic spirits but Jesus did give them the authority to command these things to depart. The reason Jesus gave them this authority was two-fold: 1) the ability to cast out demons and heal the sick associated them with Jesus, Who also was performing such miracles; 2) performing such miracles that could only come from God gave credibility to their message about Jesus and the kingdom of God. We should note that this authority was given specifically to the disciples chosen by Jesus.

---

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: 9 But *be shod* with sandals; and not put on two coats.

A "scrip" was a leather bag used to carry food. Jesus instructs them not to take anything with them that one would normally take when going on a journey. No food and nothing with which to carry food, no money to buy food, lodging or other supplies needed on their journey. They were not even to have a spare coat. The only thing besides the clothes on their back that they were allowed to bring was a walking stick. The idea seems to be that they would be totally dependent on God to supply their needs through those who welcomed their message. It would also serve as evidence that they were not preaching for money but to spread the message of Jesus Christ.

---

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

Lodging would be provided through those who welcomed the disciples' message and invited them into their house. They should be content with whatever lodging was provided by their first host rather than looking for better accommodations. This practice was in contrast with the practice of religious philosophers of the day who went from house to house begging.

---

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

If the disciples enter a city and are rejected along with their message then they are to shake the dust off their sandals as a testimony against them when they leave. The act of shaking the dust off of one's feet expressed rejection so extreme that one did not want even the dust of the city clinging to their feet. It was a rejection of those who had rejected the message of God. For a city to hear the message of God and reject it was so serious of an offense that they would be under more condemnation than Sodom and Gomorrha, cities which did not have a chance to hear the message of God before their destruction.

---

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

---

Luke mentions that Jesus sent the the disciples to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:2) and here Mark mentions that they preached repentance, each gospel writer emphasizing the two sides of the same message that John the Baptist and Jesus both preached: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:2; 4:17). The message was that men should repent and prepare themselves for the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah.

---

13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

---

Following the example of their Master, as the disciples traveled throughout Israel preaching, they also cast out demonic spirits and healed the sick as they went. It is interesting to notice that Mark alone mentions that the disciples anointed the sick with oil when healing them. In that day oil was used medicinally, which may explain its association with the healing of the sick, but doesn’t explain why it might be necessary when Jesus had given the disciples the authority to heal. There is no record that Jesus used oil to heal but the fact that apparently all of the disciples used oil in healing implies that Jesus had instructed them to use it. This also may set the context of the use of oil in the church as prescribed by James: **James 5:14-15** “*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*” However, James seems to be referring to anointing with oil prior in conjunction with asking God to heal the sick while the disciples would anoint the sick with oil and then used the authority given to them to command the person to be healed.

---

**Verses 14-29:** While the disciples were away on preaching tasks, word of Jesus and the mighty miracles that He was doing reached king Herod. Previously Herod had imprisoned John the Baptist for preaching against the fact that Herod had married his brother’s wife Herodias. Herodias hated John and began scheming to have him killed. She got her opportunity on Herod’s birthday when Herodias’ daughter danced for Herod and he offered to give her anything she wanted. Her mother instructed her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter, which Herod reluctantly did. Now Herod’s guilty conscience had convinced him that Jesus was actually John the Baptist raised from the dead.

---

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

---

The disciples have now returned from their preaching trips and they are understandably anxious to report all that they had done and said. They were excited to be able to exercise the authority that Jesus had given them to cast out demons and heal the sick. However, Jesus instructed them not to focus on the fact that they had been given authority over demonic spirits but on the fact that they had been redeemed (**Luke 10:20** “*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*”). Jesus did not want them to become arrogant or prideful because of this gift but to use it humbly.

---

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

---

**“And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while”** – Not only were the disciples tired from their journeys but they were not being given the opportunity to rest since they returned. Jesus wanted to take them to a remote area away from the crowds so that they could rest and recuperate.

**“for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat”** – As was typical during Jesus’ ministry, the crowds had gathered with their sick for Jesus to heal. Jesus never seemed to turn anyone away that needed to be healed and there apparently was a steady stream of people wanting His attention. There were so many coming that neither Jesus nor His disciples had been able to take any kind of a break, not even to eat. No doubt the disciples and Jesus were tired and hungry.

**“And they departed into a desert [secluded; uninhabited] place by ship privately [alone]”** – Jesus and the disciples board a ship and sail to a secluded place away from civilization. “Privately” indicates that no one else was with them since the point of the journey was to get away from the crowds in order to rest. Jesus enjoyed the seclusion at times, sometimes to pray and sometimes to rest. Now He is seeking seclusion so that His disciples can also rest and spiritually recharge.

---

**Verses 33-56:** Many people from the crowd see Jesus and the disciples leaving by boat and anticipate where they are going. Perhaps they guessed where Jesus was headed or perhaps they could see and follow the boat from the shore, but these people run ahead and are waiting for Jesus and His disciples when they get off the boat. Jesus had compassion on the crowd and began to teach them. Toward evening, the disciples recommended to Jesus that He send the people away so that they could buy something to eat, but Jesus challenges the disciples to provide food for the people. The disciples had nothing but they did find someone with five loaves and two fish. Jesus then breaks the bread and fish and has the disciples distribute it to the people and eventually feeds 5,000 men (not counting any women and children). After everyone had finished eating, Jesus sent the crowd away and then He sent the disciples back across the sea in the ship while He went up a mountain to pray. Meanwhile, while the disciples are struggling to row the ship against the wind, Jesus came walking on the water as if He was going to walk past them. When they saw Him, they became afraid because they thought He was a spirit but Jesus called out to reassure them. When He climbed into the boat, the wind immediately stopped, to the amazement of the disciples. They arrive in the land of Gennesaret and when Jesus went ashore, the crowds began gathering again and He began healing their sick.