

Luke (chapter 10)

I. Jesus sends out the 72 (or 70)

A. [I'm trying out the English Standard Version—available for free at <http://bible.crosswalk.com/OnlineStudyBible/bible.cgi?new=1&word=luke+10§ion=0&version=esv&language=en>]

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. *2* And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. *3* Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. *4* Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. *5* Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ *6* And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. *7* And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. *8* Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. *9* Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

B. Commentators speculate as to the reason for the choice of 70 men (in addition to the 12). Some early manuscripts say 72. The evidence is ambiguous.

C. 70 is the number of judges appointed by Moses to help lead Israel, but this seems strained, to me, as the men sent out were not leaders or judges in the same sense (Num. 11:16 ff, 24 ff). If you add the two who remained in camp, it's 72!

D. Hence, some commentators prefer 72, this being the number of members of the Sanhedrin, being a subtle claim of authority equal to the Sanhedrin (kind of a First Century Jewish city council or legislature). But these guys weren't called to govern.

E. Genesis 10 lists 70 nations of the world (72 in the Septuagint!). So some like this theory. But they didn't go into the world—just Palestine.

F. Or it could just be 12 x 6 or, added to the 12, 12 x 7, being two numbers of great spiritual significance (this is my theory).

G. Or maybe it's as simple as Jesus having 35 or 36 towns he wanted visited by these men.

II. The instructions

A. These men were to prepare the towns for Jesus' coming (in a sense, the same work of preachers today!). It would seem that if the town rejected these men, Jesus

would likely go elsewhere. Even today, if we reject Jesus' servants, we've effectively rejected Jesus. You can't have Jesus and not have his emissaries.

B. We have a "personal" relationship with Jesus, but the Bible also teaches an essential corporate relationship—we are part of the "body" of Christ and the "bride" of Christ. That personal relationship very much depends on being part of the institutional body. See 1 Cor. 12, for example. The idea of being a Christian apart from the visible church is quite foreign to Biblical thought.

C. The instructions are very similar to those given as to the sending of the 12 (and why not?).

D. V. 2 is the voice of prophecy. Jesus knew people hungered for the good news.

E. V. 3 is a reference to the innocence of the disciples. Obviously, everyone else is not a wolf. There will be opponents, but the disciples are to trust the people to support them—they should be as naïve and simple as sheep. This isn't common sense. It may not be smart. But it's God's way for this mission.

F. The phrase also indicates danger, and hence their reliance on God's protection.

G. V. 4. "No sandals" means "no second pair of sandals." They weren't sent barefoot.

H. "Greet no one" presumably means don't slow down—not "be rude." In the East, greetings could take a very long time, due to elaborate social custom.

I. "Peace" is *shalom* in Hebrew, being a greeting similar to "hello" but with the meaning "peace be with you" and having obvious religious significance.

J. Vv. 5-6 see discussion on the sending of the 12.

K. V. 7. It's only polite to eat what you're offered when you're a guest. But be willing to accept the gift. Those who preach the gospel are entitled to support because those who support them are benefited by the message. There is genuine value in their work.

L. But this may also be an injunction not to worry about being *kosher*—clean food. They may find themselves in the home of a Gentile or non-observant Jew. There's not time for such things—the mission is urgent!

M. And this tells us a lot about how we should approach mission work today. We aren't to be fastidious about minor concerns that interfere with the greater concern of getting God's word out.

N. In the Churches of Christ, we often prefer to debate over the propriety of missionary societies and the niceties of inter-congregational cooperation, and so fail to get much done in the way of missions. Jesus plainly has the attitude that we must get the work done and *nothing* is to stand in the way.

O. If you can do missions and be true to your conscience, then by all means do so—but if your conscience gets in the way of saving souls, you need to retrain your conscience. Our priorities can't be different from Jesus'!

P. Jesus again commands them to stay in the first house that invites them in. They are certainly “worth their hire” but they shouldn't waste time trying to improve their situation. Good enough is good enough. Spend your time in mission, not in shopping for a softer bed.

Q. Nor should they feel guilty for taking advantage of just one family's hospitality. God will make it up to their hosts! Don't spend time deciding where to eat or sleep!

R. The rest is much the same as for the sending of the 12.

III. The towns that refused the message

10 “But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, **11** ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you.’ Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. **12** I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

A. You'll recall from the notes on Abraham in the winter quarter that in scripture, Sodom is most often considered an example of the sin of inhospitality, and only rarely the sin of homosexuality. Homosexuality is condemned, but inhospitality or lack of concern for the needy is the charge levied against Sodom in far more scriptures.

B. The angels in Sodom were travelers under the protection of Lot's house. Just so, the disciples will be travelers under the protection of whichever house takes them in. They won't stay in the inns (which were rare and generally unpleasant places).

C. The refusal to be hospitable to and support a man on God's own mission is worse than what the Sodomites did! There's no reason to take this as exaggeration.

D. See <http://oneinjesus.info/2007/02/26/sodom-gomorrah-and-illegal-aliens-part-1/>.

E. Jesus sent men to send the message, rather than waiting for these people to find him. Perhaps the lesson is that Jesus reaches out to us—we don't so much have to seek God as not run from God's seeking!

F. There's no reason to suppose that Jesus is any less anxious today to be heard and received.

G. Therefore, the cliché "seeking God" is, on reflection, not very good theology, at least for those who've been blessed to have his self-revelation via the word and the church. We don't have to travel on some mystical, mysterious journey to one day maybe encounter God. (Sorry if this isn't poetic enough for the reader.)

H. God isn't HIDING! He wants to be found. And his church shouldn't be talking about how we're "seeking God." We've found him (or more accurately, he's found us). Why pretend otherwise?

I. On the other hand, for the church to be Christlike, we should be sending out disciples to spread the gospel just as Jesus did. While WE'RE not seeking God, plenty of people are. God isn't hiding, and we should be concerned not to hide him from others.¹

13 Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. *14* But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. *15* And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. *16* The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

J. "Woe" is not a condemnation. It's a declaration of deep regret.

K. Tyre and Sidon were the famous towns of ancient Phoenicia and were still important centers of commerce. They'd been condemned by the ancient prophets for their great sin (including one of the passages that's parallel to Jesus' statement about Satan falling!) There are Gentile communities.

L. "Hades" is the realm of the dead, not quite the same as hell, as good people go to Hades, too. Hades is the opposite of the heavens in popular thought, that is, a very low place, lower than the grave. The city will die, Jesus says, and die utterly. The Romans destroyed it in less than 40 years.

M. Jesus' point is that many Jewish communities were less willing to hear the gospel than the surrounding Gentile communities.

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

¹ For those not familiar with my congregation, we just killed the slogan "Seeking him; serving others," which has always bothered me. I don't want to pretend to have caught God in a bottle, but neither should we tell the world we've not found him yet. Perhaps this will put the final nail in the slogan's coffin.

18 And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. **20** Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

N. “Satan falling like lightning” is not a literal heavenly event (there are those who disagree, but Jesus is not yet crucified. It is, at most, prophetic.). Rather, this is idiomatic (a figure of speech) for the harm being done to Satan.

O. “Satan” in the Old Testament was pictured in Job and Zechariah as the prosecuting attorney or the “accuser”—the one who insists that humans deserve damnation. Hence, Jesus’ expression declares the defeat of the case for the prosecution.

P. The language echoes language of Isaiah and Ezekiel, used in reference to earthly kings being brought down by the hand of God. Thus, Jesus sees the beginning of the end of Satan’s rule over man.

Q. Perhaps the significance in Jesus’ mind was that his message had now been transferred with power to the second generation of teachers. His mission would have been a failure if he’d left no one behind who could continue the work. He had now put men in place who could continue after his death, which, in a very real sense, made his death possible.

R. It’s important to remember that our ultimate reward is in heaven. Jesus can bless us on earth, but it’s nothing compared to the final reward.

IV. Jesus’ gratitude

21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. **22** All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

A. It’s noteworthy that the Jesus of this passage sounds very much like the Jesus of John’s gospel—which contradicts the notion that the Jesus of John is so unlike the Jesus of the Synoptics that John must have re-invented Jesus.

B. “Rejoiced” is an inadequate translation. Jesus was “thrilled with joy” as Moffitt translates.

C. “Little children” are the innocent disciples and those that received their message.

D. Interesting that Jesus may not choose to reveal himself to everyone, just those he chooses. But, of course, the 72 and the 12 were sent only to the Jews. It wasn't yet time to reach the Gentiles, but Jesus clearly anticipates the coming of that time.

V. The blessing

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

A. The Transfiguration wasn't that long ago. Moses, Elijah, and surely David would be included in Jesus' proclamation.

B. Jesus is well aware that these are extraordinary times. It's wise to say to the disciples—Savor these moments. Nothing like this will ever happen again.

VI. How to Inherit Eternal Life

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

A. "Lawyer" is a student of the Law of Moses, an expert in interpretation.

B. "Stood up" means Jesus had been teaching a seated audience.

C. Now, let's not go too fast. The question was how do I go to heaven? And the answer was "love God; love your neighbor."

D. We search and scour the scriptures for rules and regulations, and Jesus says "do this, and you will live." Seems simple enough.

E. This is no peculiarity of the Mosaic Dispensation. The lawyer was indeed interpreting the Law of Moses, but Paul and James teach the same thing. This rule doesn't change (except that Jesus makes it much stronger!).

(Deu. 6:4-9) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul

and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Lev. 19:5 You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. 16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord. 17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

F. The lawyer adds “mind” to heart, soul, and strength, although it’s in neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint.

G. “Neighbor” certainly seems to be someone who lives near you—even the “sons of your own people.” Jesus is about to *radically* re-interpret the passage!

Rom. 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

H. Paul isn’t as obvious as Jesus, but the point is the same. The command is love is as broad as the command not to murder. Indeed, the entire law is met if we love because love requires us to do what the law says.

I. Except this is true only as to the so-called “moral law.” After all, “love your neighbor” doesn’t require an animal sacrifice or Passover meal.

J. But then, “love your neighbor” does tell us how God’s people will be judged—not by worship or organization or name but foremost by how we respond to those in need.

K. Some would argue: “But if we love God, we’ll keep his commandments.” True enough, but he’s TOLD us what his commandments are: love! Paul says “Love is the fulfilling of the love.” Do we believe him or not?

L. It completely turns Paul’s argument upside down to say that all commands are included within the command to love. Paul’s point is that the commands that bind us are the commands corollary to “love your neighbor.” Anything else is not law and hence not a command and hence not binding.

M. In Galatians, Paul gets even plainer and says that “love” means “serve.” It’s an emotion, but it’s an emotion resulting in action.

Gal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

N. And then John gets downright uncomfortable—

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

O. You see, we tend to interpret the Parable of the Good Samaritan comfortably. It teaches us not to be racists, because even Samaritans can be good people. But John and Paul seem to think Jesus taught us not only to love neighbors, but to *be* neighbors.

P. Read v. 37: “Go and do likewise.” He didn’t say, “Now stop thinking ill of Samaritans.” He said, “Do what the Samaritan did”! Ouch!!

Q. And let’s remember the opening question: what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

R. Among the lessons here is Jesus’ insistence on cutting to the tough answer. The lawyer would surely have found it easier to master the Torah (he already had!) or to punctiliously offer the correct sacrifices and sing the right psalms in just the right way. We like “positive” rules, that is, rules that are simple and a bit arbitrary—but easy.

S. It’s easy to get the right name on the building or refuse to buy a piano or appoint only two or more elders. It’s much, much harder to *be* the Good Samaritan.

T. This changes everything. See part III of *Do We Teach Another Gospel?* for a more detailed explanation. <http://oneinjesus.info/do-we-teach-another-gospel/>.

VII. The Good Samaritan

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going

down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back. **36** Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

- A. Sorry, I really don't have much to add. It's just a perfect story. The question is whether we let Jesus tell us what the point is or make up our own point.
- B. Well, I do need to add this. The story is not primarily about racism. But Jesus picked his characters for a reason. Remember, it was just a chapter ago that James and John wanted to rain fire down on a Samaritan for being inhospitable to Jesus and his followers.
- C. And we can't forget how very important hospitality is in Jesus' mind.
- D. Moreover, we're told that they refused to help Jesus because of Jesus' religion—because he was heading toward Jerusalem, rather than Mt. Gerazim. And, of course, they were wrong.
- E. Therefore, Jesus picked as the hero—as the character *we* are to identify with—the reject, someone despised by both the apostles and the Jews and part of a people who were in fact sinful in their own attitude to Jesus *and* false worshippers! Worse than that, false worshippers who looked down on those who were right—even Jesus himself. (Maybe it's not that hard to identify with the Good Samaritan).
- F. Plainly, Jesus was also making the point that we are not to judge people by race or ethnicity or, for that matter, by whether they worship on the right mountain—so long as they worship the right Savior.
- G. The same lesson is found in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) and many other examples.
- H. It's no coincidence that the first proselyte converted to Christianity was an Ethiopian eunuch—a black man who'd been castrated so he could serve in the king's household (and not be a risk to the harem).
- I. We therefore cannot pass this passage without noting how very racially divided the church is today. Martin Luther King, Jr. said America is most racially

segregated from 9 until 10 Sunday morning—and he was and still is right! The secular world is less racist than the church! And it's a great sin.

J. How do we justify being racially divided?

K. *What's the solution? [Teachers—please make a point of discussing this.]*

L. PPS — 2 denarii would pay for about 24 days' lodging. This was a generous sum.

M. PPS — the road to Jericho was famous for being the haunt of thieves, and this remained so for centuries afterwards. The road dropped 3,600 feet in 20 miles and was filled with hiding places.

VIII. Martha, Martha

38 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. **39** And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. **40** But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."

41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, **42** but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

A. Normally, as we've seen, the duty of hospitality is very important. And especially so to Jesus himself!

B. But Jesus was no ordinary person. He'd rather teach than be fed (recall the story of the Samaritan woman:

John 4:30 They went out of the town and were coming to him. **31** Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

32 "But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about."

33 So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?"

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."

C. The story has occasionally been read to belittle "women's work" compared to Bible study, but that's not the point. Offering hospitality is greatly

commended by Jesus in Luke. Rather, it's just that learning from Jesus is even more important. These things don't often come into conflict.

D. Moreover, Jesus himself is encouraging the women to learn at his feet rather than do women's work—dramatically elevating the role of women. In the First Century, women were not allowed to study the Torah. Rather, they were relegated to household work.

E. Wright makes the point that we know that Luke has intentionally re-ordered the events to place this account next to Parable of the Good Samaritan. Bethany is in the wrong place (very near Jerusalem) to fit here in the chronicle.

F. The point is surely to parallel this lesson on sexism with that lesson with it's underlying teaching against racism.

G. Jesus greatly elevated women in many ways. Here he not only approves their study of the word, but commends in as more important than their traditional role.

H. Jesus again goes out of his way to confront the local culture and customs.