

“The Apostles become Ambassadors”

February 2, 2020

Luke 9:1-9

I. Introduction

When Jesus originally chose the 12 Apostles from the larger group of His disciples in [Luke 6:12-16](#), His purpose was to teach and train a small group of men so that they might assist Him and eventually take His place when He returned to His Father. The word “*apostle*” is a Greek word and it means to “*send forth with a commission.*” It was used by the Greeks for the personal representatives of a king. They were ambassadors who functioned with the king’s authority. In the New Testament, the word “*apostle*” has both a narrow and a wide definition. In the narrow sense, which is more common, “*apostle*” stands for the special representative chosen by Jesus to play a foundational role in the establishment of the church, i.e., one of the 12 Apostles. In the wide sense, “*apostle*” stands for those sent out as Jesus’ messengers or witnesses. In the wide sense, we are all to be apostles.

Today’s Scripture marks a turning point in the lives of the Apostles. Up to this point the 12 Apostles along with all the other disciples had followed and watched Jesus as He preached the gospel message, healed diseases, performed miracles, and confronted the hard-hearted unbelief of the religious establishment. But all that was about to change, no longer were the Apostles to be mere spectators of Jesus’ power and authority. Now was the time for the next step in the Apostles’ training. They were entering the “*internship*” part of their education as they went out on their 1st short-term preaching/healing tour—the Apostles became Ambassadors. First, we see the preparations.

II. The Apostles’ 1st Missionary Journey

A. The Preparations Wanting the Apostles to be prepared and successful, Jesus called “**the Twelve together.**” And then, before sending them out, He gave them authority to cast out demons and to heal the sick. They could now perform the same kinds of signs and miracles as Jesus did—to prove that He had sent them—that God had sent them. Jesus used miracles to validate His message; in [John 10:37-38](#) Jesus

said, “Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

Now the Apostles had the same verification—2 Corinthians 12:12 says, “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles-- were done among you with great perseverance.” Like Jesus, the Apostles were to demonstrate their compassion and concern for peoples’ physical well-being as well as for their spiritual well-being: “He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

B. The Commission Jesus also gave them a commission. He told them to “Take nothing for the journey-- no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.” They were to travel light. There is a small difference between Mathew’s, Mark’s, and Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ commission. Matthew and Luke wrote that the Apostles were not to take staves, but in Mark 6:8 Jesus said, “Take nothing for the journey except a staff-- no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.” Overall, it would seem that Jesus was forbidding them from taking an extra staff as well as extra clothes. Basically, all they could take with them was what they already had in their possession, including the staff in their hands, the clothes on their backs, and the sandals on their feet.

Unable to prepare or bring provisions, they were forced to be dependent entirely on the Lord to provide. Turn to Matthew 6:31-34. Jesus wanted them to learn from firsthand experience that what He had preached was the truth. As they preached the message of the kingdom of God, they could confidently depend on God to supply their needs.

However, this restriction of what to take was just for this lesson. The Apostles, or for that matter all of Jesus’ disciples, weren’t to live in perpetual poverty. In the upper room on the night He was betrayed, Jesus talked about this; in Luke 22:35-36 we read, “Then Jesus asked them, ‘When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?’ ‘Nothing,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.’” The normal procedure for the Apostles and all of Jesus’ disciples was that they plan and prepare

wisely for the future. But, as the Apostles learned from this lesson, all Christians must remember to depend ultimately on the Lord who will keep His promise; [Hebrews 13:5-6](#) says, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So, we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’”

Jesus then said, “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.” Once people saw the Apostle’s power to heal disease and cast out demons, the Apostles would most likely receive invitations to upgrade their comfort by changing homes. But they were to accept the first offer of hospitality and they were not to move from house to house. They were to be devoted to their mission and not to themselves. This would also reduce the chance that they would create jealousy or animosity by moving to better quarters. The lesson for the Apostles was that they were to be content. Once they settled in someone’s home, they were not to seek nicer accommodations. According to [Matthew 10:8](#), Jesus also forbade them from using their ministry to make money: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Jesus finished His instructions, by telling the Apostles how to respond to those who would reject them. If a house or a village did not receive them, they had His permission to declare God’s judgment on them. Shaking the dust off of one’s feet was a traditional Jewish way of expressing scorn toward Gentiles. When Jews traveled outside of Israel, upon returning to Jewish soil they would shake the dust off their sandals as an act symbolizing that they were leaving the uncleanness and contamination of Gentile lands behind them. In [Matthew 10:5-6](#), when He commissioned the Apostles, Jesus said, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” The Apostles were going to the Jews, but if the people to whom they ministered refused to receive their message, even after they had seen miraculous signs, the Apostles were to treat them as they did Gentiles.

That town would suffer God’s judgment. In [Matthew 10:15](#) Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” Then we see . . .

C. The Results [Mark 6:7](#) says that Jesus sent them out in pairs. This would provide mutual support and protection and increase credibility by having the testimony of more than one witness. They wouldn’t only help each other; they would also learn from each other. And the result was that they “went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.” The details of their various mission trips are not recorded. But they attracted a great deal of attention. They continued this pattern of ministry after Jesus’ ascension to heaven—[turn to Acts 5:12-16](#). And the results were that “More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” They were so effective that they were brought before the Sanhedrin—[turn to Acts 5:27-28](#).

On this their first preaching/healing tour, their work was even discussed in the highest levels of government. Herod the tetrarch, the son of Herod the Great, probably like many in Galilee, “was perplexed.” As they did later, the Apostles were giving all the glory and credit for their powerful preaching and miracles to Jesus—but who was Jesus? That “some were saying that John had been raised from the dead” was particularly troubling to Herod since it was this Herod who had had John beheaded. To add to all the confusion, others were saying that “Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.”

Yet Herod, *who was haunted by his guilty conscience over the wrongful execution of John, who he said in [Mark 6:20](#) was “a righteous and holy man,”* said, “I beheaded John.” According to Mark’s account in [Mark 6:16](#), Herod kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!” Uneasy, Herod wondered, “Who, then, is this I hear such things about?”

The king desperately wanted to see Jesus, not like the crowds for healing or even out of curiosity, but because of fear. Herod’s fear was that John the Baptist had come back from the dead and a resurrected John the Baptist was a potential threat to Herod’s power. In [Luke 13:31](#) some Pharisees

warned Jesus, “**Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.**” If Jesus was indeed John the Baptist risen from the dead as Herod feared, he intended to kill Him again. But Herod would not see Jesus until He was sent to him from Pilate as a prisoner.

III. Conclusion

The 12 Apostles were the first ones Jesus sent out to tell that world that “**the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost**” (Luke 19:10). But they were just the beginning, **turn to 2 Cor. 5:17-21.** We are now Jesus’ ambassadors—our lives as well as our words need to be examples to those around us. Do others see your faith in what you do? James 2:18 says, “**But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.**”

Just like the first disciples, we don’t have to do ministry in our own strength and our wisdom. As Christians, we have the power of the Holy Spirit in us—Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:13**, “**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**” James 1:5 says, “**If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.**”

When Jesus sent out the Apostles with just what they had on their backs and in their hands, there was a sense of urgency. The message that Jesus Christ is “**the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through**” Him (John 14:6) can’t wait. Jesus said in **John 4:35**, “**Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.**” No one knows when he or she will breathe for the last time—as an old TV ad said, there isn’t an expiration date stamped on the bottom of anyone’s feet. We need to share the Gospel with others before it is too late—sooner rather than later.

The social gospel—helping those who have physical needs or issues is important. Jesus and His disciples spent a lot of time healing the sick, feeding thousands, but that wasn’t the end goal. Helping

others was a way of getting their attention so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ---the Way of Salvation could be shared. If we share God’s love with others, then like Herod did, they will ask, “Who, then, is this I hear such things about.” Then we need to be ready—as 1 Peter 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Are you ready to tell others how they can have peace concerning life after death?