

**The Sending of the 70 Disciples****Matthew 10:5—23****Luke 10:1—20**

Luke fills us in with more details than Matthew concerning the first commission given to the Disciples. In Luke 9:1 the Disciples are given power and authority over demons and the ability to cure diseases. When rejected by a Samaritan city (Luke 9:54), James and John asked Jesus if they should command fire to come down from heaven and consume the city. Jesus rebuked them because they were there to save men not destroy them. From this we can surmise that they knew they had been given great power but that they needed to learn how to properly use that power.

They were sent out to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and to heal the sick right after they received their powers. They were to make no special plans but were to leave immediately without packing or without money since God would supply everything they needed (Luke 22:35). Luke 9:10 tells us that after returning from preaching the Kingdom the Disciples went privately away into the desert by Bethsaida, a city on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

After the Disciples were commissioned and came back Christ commissioned an additional 70 (or 72) disciples. They were given the same powers and instructions as the Disciples (Luke 10). They were to go out ahead of Jesus to the cities with the Gospel of the Kingdom. They were given a shroud of protection so that nothing could harm them (Luke 10:19). They would be able to preach throughout the cities of Judea unimpeded.

The 70 returned full of joy because they experienced power over Satan. It seems strange that Christ replied to their report of their journey that He saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Some historical perspective may help in understanding what Christ was talking about here.

When Lucifer was created he was full of wisdom and beauty (Ezekiel 28:12). Although Ezekiel 28 speaks of the king of Tyre, we know the imagery is really pointing to Satan. Verse 13 says he was in Eden while verse 14 says he was the anointed cherub. He was also called perfect from his creation (verse 15). Some people claim this proves that Adam was Satan but this does not explain how Satan could tempt Adam into eating of the forbidden fruit. Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 make it clear that Satan, the Devil, the great dragon and the serpent are all the same creature. Adam cannot be the serpent.

Ezekiel 28:14 says that Satan had a high position in heaven but according to verse 18 he wanted more. Isaiah lists five “I wills” of Satan. I will ascend into heaven (not go to heaven but be more important in heaven), I will exalt my throne above the stars (spirit beings) of God, I will sit on the mount of assembly (rule over all the spirit beings), I will ascend above the heights of the clouds (be above all things), I will make myself like the Most High. Many teach that because he desired to be God that he was then cast out of heaven and given the earth as his domain. This teaching does not quite line up with other passages of Scripture. In Job (1:6—7) we see Satan with access to God when he asks permission to torment Job and in Revelation (12:7—9) we see the battle between Michael and Satan with Satan finally being cast out of heaven. This battle occurs at the mid point of the Tribulation.

With this in mind it appears that Jesus was speaking prophetically in Luke 10:18 about Satan being cast out of heaven during the Tribulation. Satan’s fall like lightning means it will be a quick fall, just as Christ’s appearing at the Second Coming will come quickly, without warning like lightning (Matthew 24:27). This point was emphasized in John 12:31 when Jesus said that now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. All of this will happen at the middle of the Tribulation after which Satan will be locked up for 1,000 years then after his released will be cast into hell (Revelation 20:1—3; 7—10).

This fits in with end-time events that were being fulfilled at that time. Christ was on His way to Jerusalem to die, He was resurrected, ascended into heaven and then the Tribulation was to begin. This last week of Daniel's 70 weeks of prophetic events was to begin shortly after Christ ascend into heaven but in God's mercy was delayed for one year allowing Israel additional time to repent of killing their Messiah and return to God (Luke 13:6—9). With the Tribulation so near there was great urgency to tell about the good news of the Kingdom and get Israel to accept Jesus as Messiah.

Those who were going out to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom were able to tread on serpents and scorpions without being hurt. This was important because they would be walking through desert areas as they go from town to town. They also had complete power over the enemy (Satan). Luke 10:19 says that nothing could hurt them. They could proclaim the gospel unimpeded, restricted only by those who accept or reject the message. If rejected they would move on and not waste their time on detractors.

There will be witnesses proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom in the Tribulation who will also apparently be protected in like manner. With the turmoil of the Tribulation, without the protection of God, his witnesses wouldn't stand a chance of surviving. Not only will the earth experience upheaval but also Satan, through unbelievers, will attempt to kill those who are spreading the Gospel. Then 144,000, who appear to be commissioned to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world (Matthew 24:14), will be specially protected with a seal from God (Revelation 7:3). I believe this seal will protect them from snakes, scorpions and from Satan. They will be fulfilling the so-called Great Commission of Mark 16:15 while demonstrating the signs of Matthew 16:16—18. These sign gifts will be instrumental in spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom to the whole world while proving to Israel that the Gospel of the Kingdom is in fact from God since the Jews require a sign (1 Corinthians 1:22).

### **A contradiction?**

When Jesus commissioned the Disciples to go out He said in Matthew 10:23 that they would not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. This is a reference to the Second Coming and this verse seems to teach that not everyone will be reached with the Gospel of the Kingdom before Christ returns. This seems to be a contradiction with Matthew 24:14 that states that the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the nations and then the end will come. A proper understanding of this verse helps to clear this up.

According to C. F. Baker:

On the meaning of this particle, Thayers Greek-English Lexicon states: "an, a particle indicating that something can or could occur on certain conditions, or by the combination of certain fortuitous causes."<sup>4</sup> In other words, these statements are conditional. We might read our present text: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man may have come depending upon the fulfillment of certain conditions. If the conditions are fulfilled, the Son of man will come before you have gone over all the cities of Israel." What then is the condition upon which His coming depended? There can be no doubt but that it depended upon Israel's repentance and acceptance of the offered Kingdom. Acts 3:19,20 makes this abundantly plain. Even though Israel had rejected Christ in incarnation, now they were given the opportunity to accept Him in resurrection and had they done so Peter says that God would have sent Him back to bring in the times of restitution spoken of by the prophets. We know now that Israel did not repent and therefore the condition stated in these four references was not satisfied, and therefore Christ did not come.

This also helps to clear up Matthew 16:28; 23:39 and 24:34.

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