

Matthew 10-11 and Luke 9-10: Jesus Sends Out His Disciples

Matthew 10-11

In Matthew 10 Jesus gives his twelve disciples authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction (Matthew 10:1). He then sends them out to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). They are to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and also heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons (Matthew 10:7-8). They are to do their ministry without receiving pay (Matthew 10:8). They are not to bring money, a bag, a second tunic, sandals, or a staff (Matthew 10:9-10). Their needs are to be provided for by the people they meet (Matthew 10:10). Whenever they enter a town, they are to find out who is worthy in it and stay there (Matthew 10:11). If the house is worthy, they are to let their peace come upon it (Matthew 10:13). If anyone will not receive them or listen to their words, they are to leave (Matthew 10:14). Those who do not receive the disciples will one day experience God's judgment (Matthew 10:15). Jesus is sending the disciples ahead of himself (Matthew 11:1).

Luke 9:1-6

In Luke 9:1-6 Jesus sends out the twelve disciples. He gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (Luke 9:1). He then sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (Luke 9:2). They are not to take anything for their journey (Luke 9:3). No staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no second tunic (Luke 9:3). The disciples went preaching the gospel and healing everywhere (Luke 9:6).

Luke 10:1-23

In Luke 10:1-23 Jesus appoints seventy-two to go ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go (Luke 10:1). He says the harvest is plentiful, therefore they are to pray to the Lord to send out laborers into the harvest (Luke 10:2). They are going as lambs in the midst of wolves (Luke 10:3). They are not to carry a moneybag, knapsack, or sandals, and they are not to greet anyone on the road (Luke 10:4). Whatever house they enter first they are to pronounce peace upon it (Luke 10:5). If a son of peace is there, peace will rest upon him (Luke 10:6). The disciples are to remain in the same house and eat and drink what is provided (Luke 10:7). They are to heal the sick and say the kingdom of God has come near (Luke 10:9). If the town does not receive the disciples, one day they will receive God's judgment (Luke 10:10-15).

Summary

Jesus sends disciples ahead of himself to preach the gospel. They are to spend time with those who are "worthy," who will "receive" them, and who are sons of "peace." To be "worthy" is to recognize the worth of Jesus (cf. Matthew 10:37-38, Matthew 22:8, Luke 14:26-27) and

become a disciple. Those who “receive” the disciples are those who receive Jesus (cf. Matthew 10:40, Luke 8:13, Luke 9:48, 53, Luke 18:17). And to be a son of “peace” is to be blessed by God (cf. Luke 1:79, Luke 2:14, Luke 2:29, Luke 7:50, Luke 8:48, 24:36). These are people who respond positively to the gospel and accept Jesus.

To reject the disciples meant to reject the gospel, the kingdom, and Jesus, which ultimately culminates in one day experiencing God’s judgment.

What’s emphasized about the people being ministered to is not their spiritual status prior to hearing the gospel, but how they respond to the gospel.

Jesus follows up his commission of the disciples with a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father acknowledging that the hidden things are revealed to those who Jesus chooses (Matthew 11:27, Luke 10:21-22). It is not the wise and the understanding who know these things, but those who come to Jesus (Matthew 11:25-30).

Application

Jesus’ commissioning of his disciples in Matthew 10-11 and Luke 9-10 is descriptive, not prescriptive or normative. This is evident from the fact that the apostolic ministry done after Jesus’ earthly ministry did not always have the same features described in Matthew 10-11 and Luke 9-10. However, although the methodology for how missions is done will look different in different contexts, the primary activity of missions is the same: to proclaim the gospel.

Missions could involve preaching the gospel to individuals, to families, or to large groups of people. It could involve going on short trips with provisions provided by the people being ministered to or it could be going on longer trips with provisions planned out ahead of time. It could involve miraculous healings or not. It could involve entering and being in homes or not. It could involve evangelism to both the influential and the marginalized. The means of missions might change, but the goal is the same: proclaiming the gospel so that people will receive Christ.