

# The Seventy Disciples Sent Out

Our last study was in John 8. In that chapter we discovered that Jesus had told the religious leaders of Israel that He was from heaven, had spoken with the Father, was sent by the Father, knew the Father and was God - the great I AM. In reaction the religious leaders of Israel accused Him of being demon-possessed and consequently wanted to murder Him (John 8:59). We are told that Jesus hid Himself immediately and escaped from the temple. We do not know how He escaped. We are never told. What happened next? Luke 10 gives us the answer. It is the next chronological event that is recorded in the gospels. In this chapter we are told that He sent His disciples out ahead to the cities that He planned to visit. In the gospels we are told on multiple occasions that Jesus had a purpose, a plan and a strong motivation to preach the gospel throughout Palestine (Matthew 9:35; 11:1; Luke 4:43; John 4:4). He was spreading the good news about the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). In Luke 4:43 Jesus had told his disciples that, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities, for I was sent for this purpose." In this study, plans are being prepared so that he can preach the good news about the kingdom.

**SOMETIME LATER.** Luke 10:1 says, "Now after this . . ." revealing that time has elapsed.

*Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come. Luke 10:1 (NASB)*

We do not know how much time has elapsed between the events in John 8 and Luke 10. This event should not be confused with the time that Jesus sent out His twelve apostles in Luke 9. The accounts are very similar but yet different. Luke 10 is about the time that Jesus sent out seventy disciples. These disciples were sent out to the different cities that He planned to visit.

Verse 1 says that Jesus sent them out in pairs. That reveals they were to prepare thirty-five cities for His visit. If we were to look at a map of Jesus' time we would discover that there were easily thirty-five cities He could have visited. This suggests that He

may have visited the larger cities of His time in order to get the good news out to as many as possible. One wonders who were the other disciples in addition to the twelve disciples? Who were the other 58 disciples? We are never told. It is obvious that they did not include the twelve. That reveals there was some reason they were not a part of the inner circle of the twelve. In every church there are those who desire to be one of the leaders of a church, but here is some reason they should not be. It is obvious that Jesus selected only twelve and not seventy disciples to be part of His inner group. We are never given any reasons other than Jesus' statement in John 15:16,

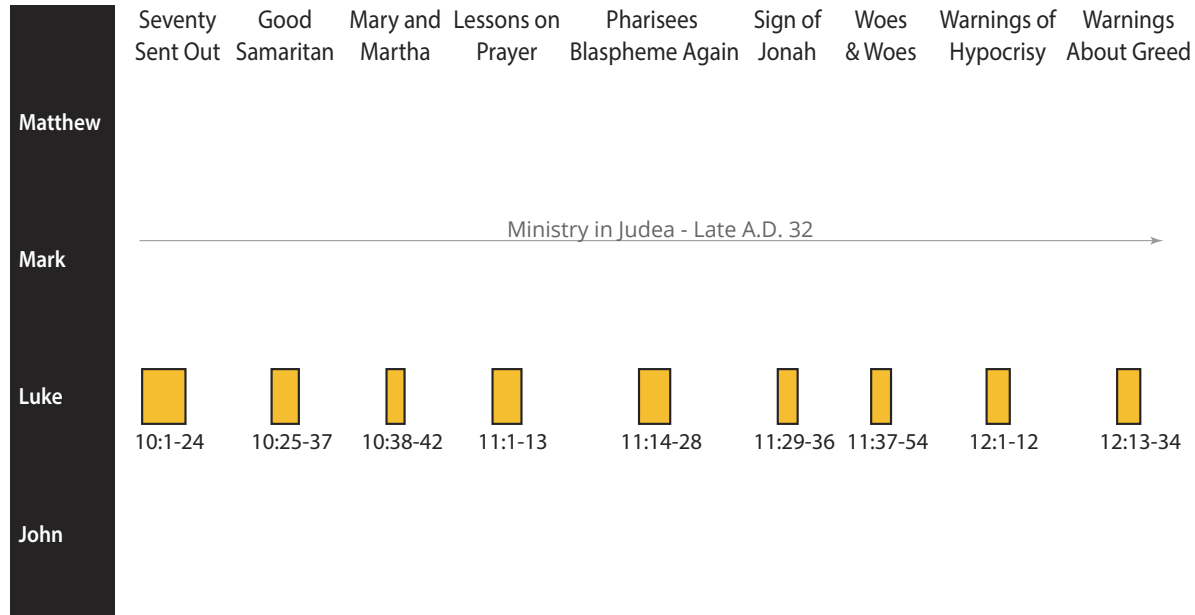
*You did not choose Me but I chose you . . .*

**THE HARVEST.** Now why did Jesus send them to thirty-five cities and maybe more? They could have gone to more than just thirty-five cities. The reason that Jesus sent them is given in verse 2,



# Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Judea - Late A.D. 32



And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Luke 10:2 (NASB)

The Greek word for harvest is *therismos*. It simply means "crop, fruit, grain or harvest." Jesus is using an illustration of a field that is ready to be harvested. The laborers are the men and women who would collect the produce from the field. But before we leave this verse, we need to ask, "Who is symbolized by the harvest?" It is obvious that Jesus is using this figure of speech to refer to people since He is sending the seventy to different cities and tells the seventy to stay with people. I should not conclude that the harvest was everyone alive at the time Jesus sent them out. The Greek word that is translated as "plentiful" is *polus*. There is another Greek word that is translated as "great." It is *meegas*. *Polus* appears to refer to a smaller number than *meegas*. Therefore, Jesus is not saying that the vast majority of the people would become Christians. He was simply saying that since many people would respond to the good news about the kingdom of God,

someone needed to go and preach.

Jesus says almost the same thing in John 4. There we are told that Jesus was speaking to His disciples after talking with the woman at the well. The disciples had urged Jesus to eat something. Jesus replied by telling them that the food He wanted to eat was to do the will of His Father in heaven. Then He added this,

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, "One sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor." John 4:35-38 (NASB)

Jesus' message was that we should not wait to start shar-

ing the good news about the kingdom of God. He said the harvest is white and ready for harvest. That is, the souls of many men and women were ready to believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and have eternal life. Jesus says there are three reasons to start harvesting the crop of the souls of men and women. First, is that when harvesting is delayed, farmers increase the risk that portions or all of the crop will be lost. When the field is ripe, any delays run the risk of crop loss. The second reason to not delay harvesting is that the workers will lose wages. The third reason to start harvesting is that the fruit that is gathered is great fruit - men and women gain eternal life. The result is that the sower and reaper can rejoice!

Then Jesus helps us understand that when we working in the field of the souls of men and women, some of us will sow but it may be that others reap. We may not reap what we sow. 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 echoes this important truth. What happens when we work in the field of the souls of men and women is God's work. He simply asks us to be faithful and work the fields.

Next we discover that He urged His disciples to pray. What a simple solution. He did not tell them to go and preach or to urge others to go and preach. Jesus urged them to do that which was the most practical - pray! Then God the Father would motivate people to share the great news about the kingdom of God. This is a great lesson for us. Evangelism is often one of the most difficult ministries for Christians due to our fear of rejection or persecution and as a result we are demotivated to share Jesus Christ. Here Jesus reveals that the best approach to evangelism is prayer. The Father hears our prayers and in response He sends evangelists to gather the harvest. Christians underestimate the power of prayer. In Acts 4:30-31 we discover that some early Christians prayed for boldness to preach Jesus Christ after the apostles Peter and John were threatened to not preach about Jesus. Rather than panic and avoid preaching about Jesus, they asked for boldness. Prayer was their answer. Prayer is the most powerful and practical thing we can do. That is an important lesson for us.

Then Jesus told them that they needed to go. Prayer came first and then they were to go! Some Christians soothe their

conscience about not sharing the good news about Jesus Christ by giving to mission organizations, individual missionaries, a missions fund at the church and to certain Christian ministries. But Jesus did not tell these men to do that. Instead, he told them to go themselves. Then He warned them that "wolves" would surround them. That is, they would be hurt while sharing the good news about the kingdom of God. The sad truth is that non-Christians love their spiritual darkness and not the light. That was Jesus' message to Nicodemus,

**This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:19-20 (NASB)**

Those in spiritual darkness hate Christians and their message. Non-Christians want Christians to behave like them (Rom. 1:32) and when Christians don't, non-Christians insult and persecute them (Matt. 5:10-12).

**DEPENDANCE IN MINISTRY.** Amazingly, Jesus tells these seventy disciples to not take a money belt, a bag or shoes.

**Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Luke 10:4 (NASB)**

We should not understand the command to not greet anyone to mean that they were to be rude to others. In Christ's day such greetings were elaborate and time-consuming. Exodus 18:5-12 is a good example of this type of greeting. It involved welcomes, kisses and a meal. Jesus commands them to avoid such greetings because the need to preach the gospel is so great. Therefore, the seventy disciples should hurry to prepare the way for Jesus' arrival. Such greetings would only slow them down.

**Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house." Luke 10:5 (NASB)**

And when they entered a house in order to have an evening

meal and spend the night, they were to say, "Peace be to this house." A good example of this type of greeting is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:5-6. In that passage David told ten young men to greet Nabal and say, ". . . peace be to your house and . . ." Then Jesus told them that if the owner of the house was a peaceful man, God would bless the man with peace.

**If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Luke 10:6**

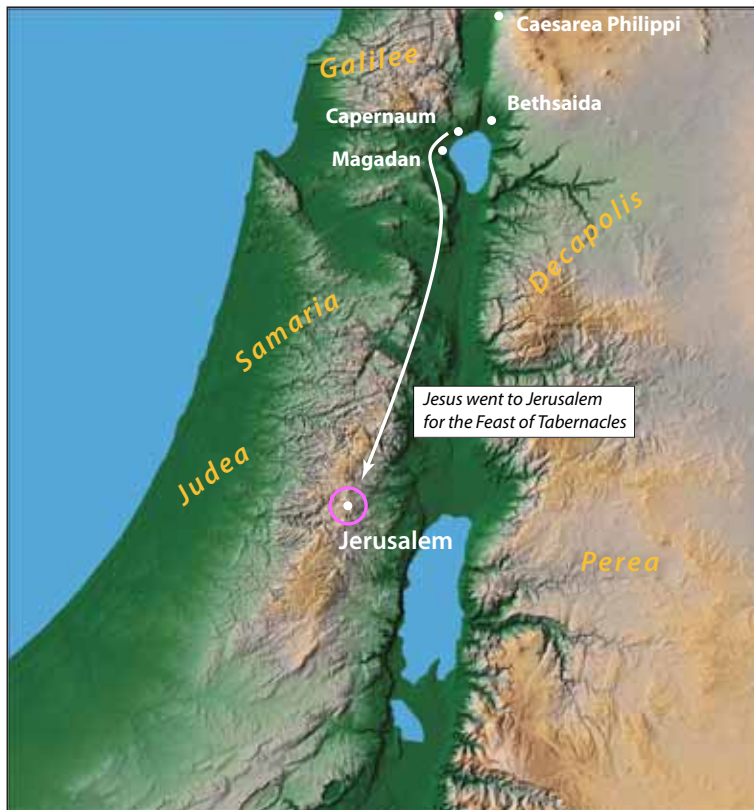
Jesus' statement is profound. The Greek word that is translated as "will rest" is *epanapauomai*. It has the sense of remaining on someone resulting in a benefit. One of the great themes of scripture is that our God is a God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). Christians are to be people of peace (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18). Most people in this world are not peaceable because they are self-centered, arrogant, unloving and unholy (2 Timothy 3:1-5), but Christians are being transformed by the Holy Spirit to become peaceable men and women (Galatians 5:22). Therefore, Jesus says that God will grant a man of peace with peace. That is, there would be a spiritual blessing of peace upon the man.

Then Jesus told them to remain in that house.

**Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Luke 10:7 (NASB)**

But Jesus' reason for remaining in the house reveals that those who share the good news about Jesus Christ are worthy of wages. The Greek word for wages is *misthos* and it has the idea of payment or the amount paid for work done. In this situation *misthos* is not money; but it is the right to enjoy food and a place to stay overnight. They were to remain as long as they were in the city.

There are two important facts we need to note about the phrase "for the laborer is worthy of his wages." The first fact is that this passage in 1 Timothy 5:18 is quoted by the apostle Paul to teach us that those who labor for Christ are worthy of rewards.



**For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 1 Timothy 5:18 (NASB)**

Now this phrase, "for the laborer is worthy of his wages," appears in only one other place in the scriptures - in the gospel of Luke. That is, the apostle Paul considered the gospel of Luke to be inspired by God and, consequently, scripture. Therefore, we conclude that this is a divine principle.

Even though God reaches down from heaven to save us and by the Holy Spirit enables us to do good work, He also rewards those works. This is an incredible truth.

The second important fact is that those who labor for Jesus Christ with a sincere and godly heart are worthy of rewards. The theme of rewards for faithful service occurs throughout scripture. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus promised rewards to every Christian.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt. 5:12 (NASB)

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matt. 6:1 (NASB)

The promise of rewards is given repeatedly in Matthew 6. For example, in Matthew 6:2-6, 16, 18, Jesus encourages us to practice our godliness in secret if we want rewards in heaven. That is, God plans to give us rewards. In Matthew 10:41-42, Jesus reveals that there is a reward for prophets. He calls the reward a "prophet's reward." In 1 Corinthians 3:8-14 the apostle Paul tells us that every Christian will receive rewards based upon our works for Christ. 1 Corinthians 4:5 suggests that these rewards will be determined by our motives. Also, 1 Corinthians 9:17-18 reveals that our rewards will also be based upon our desire to share the gospel of Christ. Further, Hebrews 6:10 states that God would be unjust if He forgot about our works.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. Hebrews 6:10 (NASB)

This verse reveals that God will reward us according to our works. But the worst news is that 2 John 8 indicates we can lose some rewards depending upon our conduct. These passages reveal that there is a divine principle in scripture we should take to heart - the "laborer is worthy of his wages." But we are not worthy of rewards for ungodly, wrongly motivated works. This principle extends to pastors and elders,

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 1 Timothy 5:17-18 (NASB)

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with

the one who teaches him. Galatians 6:6 (NASB)

Jesus' message to these disciples was one of dependence. Be obedient, depend upon God throughout your ministry and God will supply those who faithfully labor for Him.

**PURPOSE OF THEIR MINISTRY.** Next, Jesus told the seventy disciples the purpose of their ministry.

Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near." Luke 10:8-11 (NASB)

If they entered some home in a city and the owner received them, then they were to heal the sick in that city and announce the good news that the kingdom of God was "near." At first it seems strange that Jesus would refer to the house and then the city; but it seems that Jesus' point is that if no one in the city will receive you, then there is something seriously wrong with the city. It is like going to a church and if no one welcomes you, then there is something wrong with that church. What is wrong is that the love of God is not present in the hearts of those who attend that church. That reflects on everyone from the preacher to everyone who attends. Therefore, if no one in a city will welcome the two traveling disciples, then they will also not be open to hearing the good news about the love of God either. That is, the hearts of those in the city are cold and calloused. But if someone will let the two traveling disciples stay in their home and use it as their headquarters for ministry, then they were to stay and eat whatever is placed before them.

Some children and adults need to hear Jesus' words - eat whatever "is set before you." Some children and adults can be picky eaters. Now it is understandable if someone has a food allergy or health issue, but guests who otherwise impose their food preferences on their hosts have a serious problem with self-centeredness. Jesus was teaching these seventy disciples to be humble and not self-centered. The ministry is

about reaching others for Jesus Christ. Those who are not willing to deny themselves are not true servants of Christ. We are told that Jesus commanded them to heal those who were sick in that city in which they lodged.

The statement "the kingdom of God has come near" is similar to Christ's comments in Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14 and Luke 17:20-21.

**From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 4:17 (NASB)**

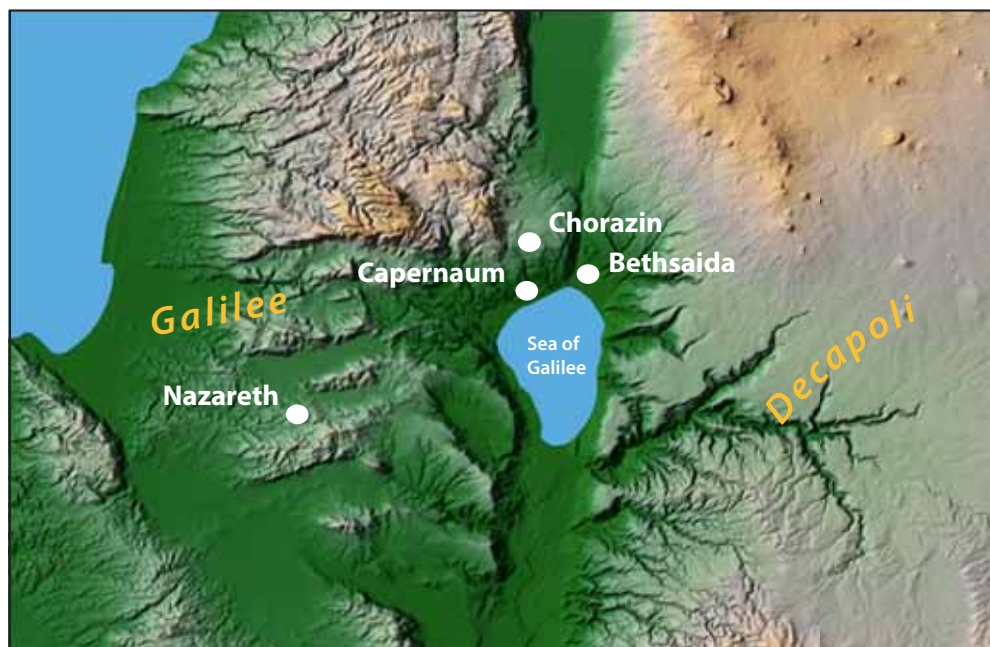
**Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14 (NASB)**

**Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." Luke 17:20-21 (NASB)**

In Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:14 Jesus announced that the kingdom of God was at hand or close. And it was closer than it had been before. When Jesus said that the kingdom of God was in their midst, the King was in their midst. In that sense the kingdom was too! If they would believe in the King of the kingdom, then they would become part of the spiritual kingdom (Matt. 13:36-43) and eventually enjoy the future millennial

kingdom here on earth (Rev. 20:4-6). It is clear that Jesus' disciples understood that the kingdom of God was not just a spiritual one in the hearts of men. Later in Luke 19:11 we are told that Jesus' disciples thought the earthly, 1,000 year kingdom would appear, but they were wrong. In Acts 1:6-7, Jesus does not tell the disciples that the kingdom is in their hearts, as some claim. Instead He reveals that the kingdom will be restored in the future. Only the Father knows the exact date.

Jesus' statement agrees with the prophets who foretold of a future earthly kingdom (Isa. 11:1-16; Joel 3:17; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-7; Zech. 14:1-21). Those who hold to the view that these prophetic passages refer to the eternal kingdom or heaven, have ignored such passages as Isa. 11:1-16 which tells us that the Israelites will return from the various nations around the world and plunder those who once hated them and will occupy their land (v. 13-14). In heaven such behavior will not occur since sin will not exist there (Rev. 21:3-8). Zechariah 14:9-21 teaches us that God will reign on earth and the nations of the world will come to visit Him. This is great example of what will occur in the millennial kingdom, but not in heaven. Therefore, the message to the disciples was that the kingdom was spiritually available now, if they believed in the King of the kingdom. It would be an earthly kingdom in the distant future, as promised to King David (2 Sam. 7:13-16).



But if no one in the city received them, then the city was to be rejected. The act of shaking dust off of their feet was a sign of rejection. That is, the visiting disciples did not even want the dust of the

city on their clothes. The city's rejection of these disciples did not change the truth that the kingdom of God was available by faith and would appear on planet earth some day. The millennial kingdom was nearer than before Jesus came.

**MINISTRY REJECTED.** Then Jesus comforted the disciples by telling them that if the city rejected them, God would severely judge the citizens of that city some day.

*I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!" Luke 10:12-15 (NASB)*

Later in Luke 11:47 Jesus will rebuke the Jewish leaders for persecuting and killing the prophets.

*Woe to you! You build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. Luke 11:47 (NASB)*

Then in Acts 7:52 the martyr Stephen rebuked the religious leaders saying that they had persecuted every one of the prophets. Consequently, the seventy disciples would not have been surprised that they could have been persecuted. Throughout scripture we are told that God will punish those who reject His prophets, apostles, pastors, and disciples. In 2 Thessalonians the apostle Paul promised the Christians in Thessalonica that God would repay those who afflict His followers,

*For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire . . . 2 Thess. 1:6-8*

In Psalms 94 we read this promise,

*They band themselves together against the life of the righteous*

*And condemn the innocent to death.  
But the Lord has been my stronghold,  
And my God the brock of my refuge.  
He has brought back their wickedness upon them  
And will destroy them in their evil;  
The Lord our God will destroy them.*

*Ps. 94:21-23 (NASB)*

God is seeking to comfort us by promising to repay the wicked for their wickedness. God is our defender and our Rock.

In Romans 12 we are encouraged to not seek our own revenge. Notice that Jesus did not tell them to take any action against those who persecuted them. Instead, Jesus promised them that God would balance the books of justice. Our just and righteous God would cause them to receive a well deserved and just punishment. When Jesus announced judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida, He revealed that God would take the action. He also reveals that there are degrees of judgment. He says, "it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you." That is, Chorazin and Bethsaida were witnesses to more miracles than Tyre and Sidon and yet they rejected Jesus Christ. During Jesus ministry He performed most of His miracles in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Yet they rejected Him. In verse 15 Jesus announces judgment on Capernaum.

The same principle applies to us also. Listen to the apostle Paul's words in Romans 12.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom. 12:14-21 (NASB)*

Notice that we are told that if we seek to repay evil for evil, then we do not leave room for the wrath of God. That is, God will not judge them to the fullest extent or in the worst way. In Job 31:29-30 we are told that if we rejoice when our enemy suffers, we have sinned. In Prov. 24:17-18 we are told that if we do rejoice, God will turn His anger away from our enemy. The message is that we should love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-44) and let God wisely and justly judge them. The most important reason why we should never pursue revenge for ourselves is that we do not have a divine perspective on justice and we do not know the hearts of men and women. But God knows and He knows what they deserve.

I am sure glad that Jesus made the next statement in the next verse and not one of the disciples, otherwise, it would have looked like he was a proud man and wanted others to blindly obey him or give him undeserved respect.

*The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me. Luke 10:12-16 (NASB)*

Jesus says that those who listen to anyone teaching scripture is listening to Christ. The opposite is true too! If they rejected a teacher of scripture they are rejecting Christ. I know a pastor who once told one of his leaders that if the man disobeyed him, he would be disobeying the Holy Spirit. The leader was shocked at the boldness of the pastor's statement and the church eventually lost 80% of the congregation. Yet,

Jesus' statement is true when a man or woman accurately teaches what God has said from the Bible. Those who listen to anyone who is accurately teaching scripture is listening to God, because God wrote it. Therefore, if someone rejects one who is accurately teaching scripture, they are rejecting God because He wrote it.

Then Jesus made a statement that is sobering. If we reject what Jesus said, then we have rejected God. This should be great encouragement to those who teach the Bible and share what God has said from the Bible. They are speaking authoritatively when they speak. God is speaking through them when they teach scripture accurately. They are not sharing opinion of some man. They have authority.

**CONCLUSION.** Jesus wanted to encourage these seventy men. He sent out that God would judge those who insulted, persecuted or rejected them. They were not to seek their own revenge. God would do it. There is a direct application to every Christian. If you are ever insulted, persecuted or rejected by others because you are serving Jesus Christ, then rejoice! Why rejoice? Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:10-12 that we will have great rewards in heaven. We need a heavenly focus and not earthly-focus. The servants of Christ will suffer, but they need to leave revenge with God. Jesus sent these men out to minister for Him. He encouraged them to not seek revenge for insults, slander, persecution or any other type of abuse. They were to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44-45) and let God balance the books of justice.