

them with oil. They were to go empty-handed and depend on the people to support them. They were to carry only their wearing apparel so as not to be hindered with much luggage. Wherever they stopped, they were to leave their peace upon the house and if they were refused admission to shake the dust off their feet. They went out and preached and had a great success. Even Judas preached some fine sermons and healed many people. They returned and made a glowing report. They were elated at their first attempts. Jesus saw that they were still filled with self so he took them aside into the wilderness where they could rest and evaluate what they had done. This was a trial effort. It was to determine how well they had taken in the teachings of their Master. In education it was practice work. Here they are active agents, largely on their own. This is a limited mission for men of limited understanding. Note the limits. "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Stay within the limits of the cities of Israel and by no means go beyond the borders of Jewry." What was the wisdom of these limitations? Is it not good judgment for us today to stay within our limits and to know our limitations? Before the twelve could go into all the world, they had to have a base of operation. And too, Jesus Himself rarely went beyond the borders of the Jews with His message of salvation. Why? When and where were these infrequent excursions beyond the borders of Palestine? It is a reasonable deduction that the twelve were not sufficiently developed in their spiritual lives, they were still narrow in their conceptions of God, they were still steeped in prejudice against the Samaritans and the Gentiles to carry a message of universal salvation.

They were not experienced enough to present an argument for Christ and His ways of life because they knew too little about Him and had too many doubts themselves.

They were given a definite work to do. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Give freely as you have received freely. As you go, preach, saying "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Their preaching was to be predictive in this initial venture. They were to go into whatever city He was to later enter as His advertizers. The universal venture would be to preach a gospel of convictions that this Man Jesus was the Christ. Here they are simply to announce that the kingdom of heaven is near, that is that the Christ was at hand. Up to now they knew nothing about the place of the cross in salvation nor the true nature of Jesus or the true meaning of the gospel nor the place of the resurrection in the redemptive scheme. There was a grave danger that men with such crude ideas might foster delusive hopes. Thus Jesus wisely limits their preaching to a predictive announcement that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. There were those who were looking for a kingdom of earth but He tells them to preach the kingdom of heaven is near. This simple statement would keep his enemies guessing and his friends hoping.

They made a fine impression and reaped great results. They had won great acclaim from the people. Jesus had to take them aside and let them rest and give them more instructions. He noted that too much emphasis had been placed on the casting out of devils. Jesus tries another technique. He sent out 70 others to see how they would do. Luke 10:1-20. Read this carefully.

The Final Commission and the World-wide Venture

Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Acts 1:1-14; Read it

Many things had happened since they went on their initial mission. They had been schooled in the meaning of the crucifixion; they had been tested and found wanting; they had seen Him die and had felt the whole undertaking had been a failure and mistake. They had given up hope and had been shaken out of their despair by proof that He had risen from the dead. They had seen Him alive.

They were convinced that He was the Christ. Something had come into their lives that gave them great boldness. They felt an impulse that the whole world needed to know about what had happened in Jerusalem. He had shown them that He was the anointed of God and had power. Today He sends them into all the world to preach what He had told them and what the Holy Ghost would reveal to them. Their specific aim is given: "Preach the Gospel to every creature, that is, make disciples of all men in every nation. Everywhere you go, preach what you have seen of me. I will be with you not in bodily presence but in my spiritual presence. You will get special power in ten days after I am gone."

Here they are sent into all the world to make friends in all nations

for His name. Here they are sent on a new astounding venture, never before attempted by any group. They are not to preach the kingdom of heaven is at hand but to tell men how to enter this kingdom through repentance, conversion, regeneration, sanctification and holiness.

The last meeting with Jesus was a great experience to those who had lived so intimately with Him. What they experienced we today can, too, if we will live in the consciousness of His presence.

They went everywhere and preached that Jesus is the Christ. Men who were only fishermen, unlettered, unlearned and weak in faith, started a movement that was greatly enhanced by Paul who interpreted the death and resurrection of Christ in such a way that men today are hearing the gospel preached in their own tongues. Has the gospel failed? A better question would be has it been preached and lived?

Review and Evaluation

Now that you have studied the men who worked with Christ and who started the Christian movement, organized the churches of the New Testament, write your appraisal of their characters and the place they filled in the early stages of the church.

Contrast the leadership of Peter and Paul and show how each affected the New Testament churches.