

THE TWELVE SENT FORTH.

IV. QUAR., LESSON XI., DEC. 16, MATT. 10:5-16.

Golden Text – "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." – Matt. 10:7.

In this lesson we have an account of the method which the Lord pursued in the harvest work of the Jewish age. This is a topic which should be of very special interest to those who recognize the present as the harvest time of the Gospel age, and who believe that the same Lord of the harvest is now present directing and superintending the work of this harvest as he did that (See Rev. 14:14; Matt. 13:30; Mark 4:26-29); and who see further, that the two ages correspond to each other as type and antitype.*

*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., Chap. vii.

In the two harvests we see a remarkable correspondence, not only in the exactly equal time allotted to each – 40 years – but also in the character of the work to be done and the methods of doing it. The present harvest work has now been in successful operation for twenty years (1874-1894), and the methods which the Lord's providence has indicated and blessed have been very similar to those of the Jewish harvest. Though the Lord is not visibly present here, as he was there, we have the assurance of his Word, as above cited, that the work is his – under his direction, supervision and full control; and he who does not believe this has no authority for engaging in it; he is not sent. But he who is sent, and who goes under the Lord's direction, is appointed to one of the grandest privileges that was ever offered to any man, although now, as in the Jewish harvest, the present reward is nothing that the world would envy. – Matt. 10:16-28,34-36.

While the methods in this harvest and the Jewish have been similar, there is no reason to believe that they ought to be exactly alike; for the Lord of the harvest is surely at liberty to adopt in either case the methods that please him best: and in each case he has evidently taken cognizance of the conditions and circumstances of the times, and adapted his methods accordingly. The following points of similarity and dissimilarity in the methods of the two harvests are worthy of comparison as indicating first, the similarity of the work, and, secondly, the freedom of the Lord in adapting his methods to the circumstances of the times.

In the Jewish harvest the Lord sent out first the twelve, and then the seventy, and was ready to send as many more as might become ready; for, said he, "The harvest is great, and the laborers are few." (Luke 10:1-12.) He sent them out two and two under his direction and supervision. He also gave them a message to declare and instructions how and to whom to declare it, and required that those going forth should be fully consecrated to the work, being filled with his spirit. Indeed, such were his forewarnings of the present wages they should receive, that none would undertake it except such as had learned to walk by faith, who were willing to "endure hardness as good soldiers," and whose "treasure" was "laid up in heaven."

In the present harvest the same course is manifest. Since its beginning in 1874, the Lord has been instructing his consecrated disciples in the truths of another new dispensation, revealing the glorious harmony and beauty of his plan in outline and detail, and also its orderly times and seasons; and as they have become prepared he has been sending them out – generally two and two, where they have been able to give their **[R1742 : page 382]** whole time to the work – to declare, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (in its glory and completeness now, as, at the time of the Jewish harvest, it was at hand in its embryo condition) and to explain and prove the truth of the message.

As in the Jewish harvest the Lord's instructions confined the special work of those messengers to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so his instructions here confine the special work of his messengers to the household of faith – spiritual Israel. – Gal. 6:10; Isa. 52:7.

Here, too, as there, they have been forewarned of that which their experience bears out; viz., that there is no earthly gain in it, no ease or worldly honor, no present reward except the blessed consciousness of being a co-worker with God and of knowing the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, the joys of heart-communion with him now, and the hope of future glory in his presence. Only those who accept of these conditions, and who are willing to endure hardness as good soldiers, being impelled thereto by the spirit of the Lord abiding in them, have any desire or incentive to this service; and if any such grow weary in well doing and look longingly back to the things left behind, it is not long before they drop out by the way.

In the respects just mentioned the methods in the two harvests are very similar; but there are also points of dissimilarity which we should not fail to note. For instance:

(1) Those sent out in that harvest preached the truth orally, and attention was drawn to them and their message by reason of the miracles which they were empowered to perform; while in this harvest the preaching is done largely by the printed page, disseminated through the agency of traveling colporteurs sent out generally two and two to bear the message.

The propriety of this feature of the change is very manifest, since now education has become general and the printing press has largely multiplied the influence of every one of the harvesters. By taking advantage of this modern invention they magnify the influence of the truth a thousand fold. And in consequence of these improved facilities of printing and of general education, and the still greater advantage of nineteen centuries of gospel privilege and blessing, the truth now

needs no such endorsement as the miracle-working power given at first, and so necessary then to the awakening of attention and the confirmation of the truth. In fact such methods now would be out of harmony with the thief-like presence and mission of the Lord here. (Rev. 16:15; Matt. 24:43,44; 1 Thess. 5:2.) If he comes as a thief, it is not to sound a trumpet before him, calling the world's attention to his work. Those gifts gradually disappeared from the Church as the necessity for them decreased. When faith gained a sure and substantial footing, such helps were taken away, and believers were expected to walk by faith, and not any longer by sight.

(2) Those sent out in that harvest were instructed to depend upon the people to whom they went for support in temporal things, while the reapers of this harvest are independent of such means, greatly to the advantage of the work. The reason for this variation is also manifest. In the Jewish harvest the reapers were sent exclusively to a consecrated people. The entire nation had bound itself by a solemn covenant to the Lord (Exod. 19:8), and in consequence had been specially favored in many ways, but chiefly in that to them were committed the oracles (the law and the testimonies) of God. (Rom. 3:1,2.) According to their covenant, therefore, it was the duty, and it should have been esteemed by them a privilege, to receive and entertain any messenger of the Lord whose credentials warranted such a claim and thus protected them from impostors – as theirs did, their personal character and demeanor and the divine testimony of miracles thus endorsing them. It was because of this preparation of Israel as a people for the reception of the **[R1743 : page 382]** gospel (whether they had profited by it or not), that they were expected to recognize both the harvest message and the appointed and attested messengers; and their opportunity for either receiving or rejecting them was the first applied test of their worthiness of the special favors then about to be offered to them. It was on this account that the harvesters were instructed to go to that people in a manner to impress them with a sense of their obligations as a covenant people to receive and gladly to entertain the messengers of the Lord to them. Throughout the whole

nation the fame of the Messiah and the divine attestations of his power and authority had spread (Matt. 4:23-25; Mark 1:28,32-34,45; 6:31-34; 8:26,27; Luke 4:14,15,36,37; Matt. 9:26,31; 14:1,2), [R1743 : page 383] and these now sent forth in his name represented him, so that in receiving them they were receiving him, and in rejecting them they were rejecting him. Hence the blessing promised on their reception, and denunciations that followed their rejection. (Verses 11-15.) When they departed out of the city or house that rejected them, they were to shake off the very dust of their feet for a testimony against them, because that, in so doing, they were violating their most solemn covenant with God and bringing upon themselves the just condemnation of such a course. That condemnation, however, was not to eternal death, but to deprivation of the privileges and blessings of the new dispensation then about to be offered to them, but of which they proved themselves unworthy. Nor was the condemnation, either then or at the full end of their age, an individual one; for although the nation as a whole was cast off from divine favor and blinded, and destined to remain so until the gospel favor had passed over to the Gentiles, yet, during this time, if any individual of the nation repented and severed his ties with the nation and family (which the persecuting spirit of the nation has always compelled), he might, through such tribulation, enter into the embryo kingdom – the Gospel Church.

In this harvest the circumstances attending the work are in many respects quite different. Though here also the Lord has a consecrated people – nominal spiritual Israel – they are not a local nation within a circumscribed boundary, but they are scattered here and there as wheat in the midst of tares. The reapers here must therefore search them out singly, while there they were grouped in cities and families and as an entire nation.

Again, the circumstances here are the reverse of those there in that the testimony to the truth is given in the midst of a very babel of voices, all claiming to teach the truth; and so great is the confusion that only the consecrated and faithful souls, whose practised ears know

the Master's voice from all others, are able to discern it. They have an affinity for the truth: the holy spirit within them recognizes the same spirit in the message, as well as in the messengers, and it satisfies their longings as nothing else can do.

Thus the harvest message becomes a test of faithfulness to God's covenant people here, and as a sickle it accomplishes the reaping. These different circumstances and conditions of this harvest make necessary the very reverse of the former method of the dependence of the messengers upon the hospitality of the people. Now, in order to make manifest that no mercenary motives, or motives of indolence, or love of ease, or popularity, or of desire to impose on others prompt the reapers of this harvest, the Lord in his providence has so arranged the work here that all such motives are manifestly eliminated from the harvest work; and it is seen to be a self-sacrificing labor of love, prompted by that devotion and zeal which the truth alone inspires. And this of itself commends the truth to the attention of the Lord's people where the messenger comes in contact with them, though often it reaches them through the printed page alone, where the luster of the truth is its own commendation.

This difference in the two harvests was aptly illustrated by the Lord when he likened the Jewish nation to wheat and chaff, and his work there to a fan for blowing the chaff away – thus indicating the compactness of that people; while here his professed people are likened to wheat and tares, thus indicating their scattered and confused condition and the necessity of careful searching and gathering out.

It would therefore be entirely out of order for the reapers in this harvest to denounce or shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against any city now, for no city or community as such is now in covenant relations with God as was Israel; and so different are the customs and circumstances of this time that a man might brush the dust and denounce the people for a week and not be noticed, or, if noticed, merely considered as of unsound mind, so intent are the

masses of the people on pursuing their own course and grasping after gain.

The consequence now to those who recognize and yet reject the truth will be very similar to those which followed Israel's rejection (their complete overthrow in the midst of great tribulation), excepting that the increased light and privilege of this time will merit and receive the greater punishment – "a time of trouble *such as never was* since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1.) Surely, then, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15) in the day of judgment (the Millennial age) than for the condemned house of Israel, either **[R1743 : page 384]** fleshly or spiritual, which are judged unworthy of the grace of God, because they cast it from them. The judgment upon condemned fleshly Israel was a terrible overthrow in the midst of harrowing scenes of war and desolation and famine, leaving them utterly desolate and scattering them as fugitives among all nations; while that which is shortly to come upon nominal spiritual Israel is described as a time of unparalleled trouble, such as never has been and never again shall be.

Another point of contrast which this lesson suggests is that between the Lord's methods for the harvest work of the Jewish age and the subsequent methods of the inspired Apostles, equally under the Lord's direction and supervision, which not only winnowed the grain of that harvest, but also sought to systematically store it. The wheat of that dispensation was to form the nucleus of the Christian Church – the embryo kingdom of heaven – which as a compact and sympathetic body subject to Christ, imbued with his spirit, and representing his truth, was to stand before the world as a living testimony to his truth and to the power of his grace for nearly two thousand years. It was necessary, therefore, as believers multiplied in the days of the apostles, to adopt some simple method of recognition which would serve to unify them and to make them helpful one to another as members of one body.

But as that work of organizing the Church of the new Gospel dispensation was no part of the harvest work of the old Jewish dispensation, so the present harvest work or reaping of the Gospel dispensation is also separate and distinct from the work of the new Millennial dispensation now drawing on. But there is this difference between our days and those of the apostles: the wheat of the Gospel age is not to form the nucleus of another Church for the Millennial age; and those gathered out from among the tares are not beginning, but are finishing their course on earth, and the time of their sojourn in the flesh is very short and cannot go beyond the twenty years of harvest yet remaining. Their organization for the work of the new dispensation will be beyond the veil, when they are changed to the glorious likeness of the Lord.

In view of these facts and also of the nature of the harvest work, and the additional fact that each one so gathered is expected to enter into the harvest work as a reaper, and will do so to the extent of his ability and opportunity, it is plain that the forming of a visible organization of such gathered out ones would be out of harmony with the spirit of the divine plan; and, if done, would seem to indicate on the part of the Church a desire to conform to the now popular idea of organization or confederacy. (See Isa. 8:12.) The work now is not organization, but division, just as it was in the Jewish harvest proper (Matt. 10:34-36.) And this harvest, as illustrated by the natural, is the busiest time of all the age, because the time is short and the "winter" is fast approaching. What is to be done must be done quickly, and there is abundant room in the great field for every member of the body of Christ to reap.

While, therefore, we do not esteem a visible organization of the gathered ones to be a part of the Lord's plan in the harvest work, as though we expected as an organization to abide here for another age, we do esteem it to be his will that those that love the Lord should speak often one to another of their common hopes and joys, or trials and perplexities, communing together concerning the precious things of

his Word, and so help one another, and not forget the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is; and so much the more as they see the day approaching. – Mal. 3:16; Heb. 10:25.

Let us, then, give ourselves diligently to the great harvest work, observing and carefully following the providential lines for the guidance of the work as indicated by the Lord of the harvest – the same Lord, and just as truly present and active in this harvest as in the Jewish harvest, though invisible to mortal sight. What dignity and grandeur and blessed inspiration does the realization of this truth give our humble services! Truly it is not a glory which the world can discern, but faithfulness to the end of our course will bring an exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will appear to all God's intelligent creatures of every name and order; for in the ages to come he will show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his loving kindness toward us who are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7); and, praise the Lord! our exaltation and glory will be for a grand and benevolent service – even the privilege of scattering universal blessings.
