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"THE LORD APPOINTED SEVENTY OTHERS ALSO."

– LUKE 10:1-11,17-20. – SEPT. 2. –

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few."

OUR LORD HAD previously sent forth the twelve apostles, as heralds of himself and the Kingdom. (Luke 9:1-6.) The sending forth of seventy was evidently some little time afterward, probably in the last year of his ministry. Their commission reads almost in the same words as that given to the twelve, tho they are not recognized anywhere as apostles on an equality of authority with the twelve. The fact that seventy men would voluntarily go forth as ministers of the Lord, without hope of earthly reward or salary, is a sufficient evidence that a strong influence had already been exerted by Jesus' teaching. In this connection we remember the Apostle's statement that above five hundred brethren were sufficiently advanced in knowledge and zeal to be accounted worthy of meeting the Lord after his resurrection, which implies a keen interest on the part of several times that number. We may reasonably suppose that these seventy were representatives of a much larger company of deeply interested ones. They were sent into the various cities and villages, whither the Lord himself would go. They were to prepare his way by announcing the Kingdom at hand, and by performing the miracles intended to demonstrate the authenticity of their message. [R2674 : page 233]

An explanation of why they were sent forth is given (verse 2): it was because the harvest was great and the laborers too few to properly consummate the work in the time appointed of the Father. All interested were expected to share in this appreciation of the greatness of the work, and the necessity for more laborers being sent forth; and it is but reasonable to suppose that the seventy sent were chosen from amongst those appreciating the situation and anxious to be commissioned.

There are several lessons for us in this matter: we too are in a harvest time – in the harvest time of the Gospel age, as they were in the harvest of the Jewish age. Now, as then, the harvest work is great, and the laborers are comparatively few; and now, as then, we cannot hope that any would succeed in doing harvest work unless specially commissioned or sent forth by the Chief Reaper. Hence, all who appreciate the work now in progress, should pray to the Lord to send them forth in his service, or if already engaged in it, that he would graciously open to them doors of opportunity for greater usefulness in his service. In the beginning of this harvest comparatively few were used of the Lord in connection with the harvest work; but as we progress we find that the Lord is graciously pleased to send forth and use more and more those who are zealously anxious to lay down their lives for the truth.

The expression, "The harvest is great," does not necessarily mean that the amount of ripe "wheat" to be garnered is great. It means rather that the difficulties and oppositions, and multitudes of "tares," make it difficult to reach all of the "wheat" class. The work is great here, as it was great in the end of the Jewish age; yet only a "little flock" will be gathered now, as only a remnant was gathered from Israel, as the Apostle Paul pointed out. (Rom. 9:27.) The mass of Israel professed to be the Lord's people, but their piety was little more than profession. They drew nigh to the Lord in attendance at the synagogues, and in celebrating the feasts, felt full and self-satisfied, and looked with pity upon the Gentile nations, and had a great spirit of missionary aggressiveness, and "compassed sea and land to make a proselyte" to Judaism. Nevertheless, the Lord, who read the heart, recognized that theirs was only a formal lip service, and that their hearts were far from him; and we see conditions to-day very similar to this, in nominal spiritual Israel.

None were fit to be sent out as heralds of the Kingdom except such who thoroughly believed in the Kingdom – such as had accepted Jesus as the Messiah; such as believed in his presence – such,

therefore, as could speak forth with earnestness and power the message they were sent to bear. And so it seems to be in this harvest time. The Lord is sending forth more laborers continually; yet only such as recognize the Kingdom as nigh, even at the door; only such as recognize the *parousia* of the King; only such as have a zeal to tell the joyful tidings to others, are being used and blessed of the Lord in the gathering together of his elect, – the ripe "wheat," his "jewels." – Psa. 50:5; Mal. 3:16,17; Matt. 13:39,41.

It is not supposable that our Lord meant that any should appeal to him to send forth more laborers into the harvest, who at the same time would not be willing and anxious, to the extent of their ability, to enter this harvest service themselves. There may be some, but we trust very few, who would be prepared to pray: "O Lord bless, I pray thee, thy work, and send forth more laborers; but do not send me. Permit others to sacrifice time and strength and zeal, that I may rest, and have neither part nor lot in the matter, sacrificing little or nothing." Only those are properly qualified to petition the Lord on such a subject, whose hearts are burning with a desire to do with their might what their hands may find to do, according to their opportunities. Such, in praying, would be anxious, first of all, to themselves be used as servants of the great Chief Reaper; for it is "he that reapeth that receiveth wages and that gathereth fruit unto eternal life" now, as it was also in the Jewish harvest. Those who are most zealous to serve the Lord, and most willing to sacrifice on behalf of his cause, are the ones who will receive the greatest present blessing of spiritual fellowship with the Lord, and who will be the best prepared to share the glories soon to be revealed.

The Lord adopted with the seventy the same method that he started with the twelve; *viz.*, of sending them two and two; and similarly we, at the present time, encourage the colporteur laborers in this harvest to go two and two, for mutual encouragement and helpfulness, etc. As the poet has said,

"So when two together work, each for each

Is quick to plan and can the other teach;
But when alone one seeks the best to know,
His skill is weaker and his thoughts are slow."

It is questionable just why the Lord chose seventy for this work. However, we remember that Moses chose seventy of the elders of Israel for his assistants, and that this number, seventy, was from that time onward preserved in Israel, and known as the "*Sanhedrin*," or committee of seventy chief men and judges. In the light of this fact, it would appear that if the nation of Israel had been in proper condition of heart to receive the Lord, the chiefs of that nation would already have embraced his cause, and the seventy members of the Sanhedrin would by that time have been proclaiming the Messiah through the length and breadth of Palestine. But since they had not received the King, and had not prayed him to commission them to announce [R2674 : page 234] him, our Lord commissioned others, and the work went on, the honor and privilege passing by those of influence and education who might have enjoyed it had they been worthy. Doubtless the seventy sent forth were, like the apostles, chosen from amongst the honest-hearted of the common people, and not many, if any of them, were rich, wise or learned.

Likewise, in this harvest time, there are many ministers, professedly servants of the truth, and possessed of education, influence, etc., who by now should realize that we are in the harvest of the Gospel age, and should be seeking of the Lord an opportunity to engage in the harvest work; but instead, they are described as "dumb dogs, lying down, refusing to bark" – refusing to awaken the household under their care, to let them know that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and that all not received into the Kingdom are about to be plunged into a great time of trouble. All of the spiritual house of to-day must either receive a more than pentecostal blessing, in being "changed" and made sharers of the Kingdom, or else, being rejected from the Kingdom, receive a baptism of fiery trouble – having their

portion with the world, not being accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the world. – Luke 21:36.

That the Lord did not expect the seventy to convert and gather in all Israel is very distinctly shown in his statement, "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." The Master knew that the majority of the professedly consecrated Israel of God were consecrated to self and selfishness, to sect and party, and not to the truth. The majority were represented as voracious wolves, not sheep. Nevertheless, there were lambs and sheep amongst the goats and the wolves, and these all must hear the message, and thus be prepared to receive the Messiah, when he should present himself to them.

Special instructions were given to these specially sent-forth ones. They had a peculiar work to do and the conditions accorded. They were not, therefore, a criterion for subsequent workers under different circumstances. They were to carry neither purse, nor valise, nor extra shoes, and were to salute no man by the way. They would thus be dependent on the generosity of those to whom they ministered the truth. And the effect of this would be beneficial in several ways. (1) It would test the faith of those who went forth, and keep them continually depending on the Lord's supervising care, and trusting that he who had sent them knew how to make provision for their necessities while they complied with his commands. (2) It would furnish an opportunity for hospitality to those to whom they preached, and who, by reason of the necessities of the case, would be constrained to reach a decision promptly as to whether or not they were in sympathy with the **[R2675 : page 234]** message, and hence with the messengers, and willing to entertain them. The same lesson of dependence on the Lord was implied in the provision for no change of raiment. Besides, it was to be but a short tour.

The injunction not to salute any one by the way, may be understood to refer to the custom in Oriental lands of travelers stopping frequently to chat with each other respecting the news. The

disciples had but one message, the good tidings, and they were to give all diligence to its promulgation, and not to be general newsmongers. On arriving at a house they were to take careful note respecting their reception, and were to anticipate this with a prayer that peace, blessing, favor, might be upon that house and its inmates. If a son of peace, a child of God, resided there, they might expect that under the Lord's providence they would have a kind reception, and were to accept it as of the Lord's arrangement. If they were not so received, they were to consider it as an evidence that that was not the home of God's people, living in covenant relationship with him, and were to take their departure, seeking another and another place. Peradventure they found no entertainer in the village, they were, nevertheless, to give their testimony. And it should be given in a striking manner; *viz.*, by the shaking of the dust from their shoes, which, to the Oriental mind, would signify a very solemn and final testimony; and then they were to say, "Notwithstanding, be sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

All who are engaged in the present harvest work may learn some very profitable lessons here, applicable, indeed, to the Lord's people at any time while engaged in his service. We have no time for the ordinary converse. The time is short; the harvest work is great; the laborers are few; our time is consecrated; we must labor while it is called day, knowing that a night cometh wherein no man can work. We have consecrated our lives even unto death; we are commissioned of the great Lord of the harvest to seek for the true "wheat," and to gather it into the barn. What time have we for frivolities or worldliness or the many social amenities? Rather, we must content ourselves with giving very little attention to these things, and must press along the line, engaging heartily in the work given us to do, if we would have the approval of our Master, his "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Altho it is not customary to-day, as it was in Palestine nineteen centuries ago, to salute a house and say, "Peace be to this house!" nevertheless all of the Lord's people should be peacemakers, peace-

promoters, peace-lovers, and a blessing of peace and restfulness should go with them wherever they go. Alas! how many of them are slow to learn that God has not called us to [R2675 : page 235] strife, contentions, bickerings, anger, etc., but to love, joy, peace, etc. How few, comparatively, have learned how to speak the truth in *love*; and always to give a soft answer which turneth away wrath; and always to avoid the grievous words which stir up anger. Like the seventy of our lesson, in our daily avocations and efforts to minister to others, let the peace of God go with us, shining in our faces, governing our actions and intoning our language, so that, as the Apostle expresses it, our speech shall be always seasoned with grace.

Conditions in civilized lands to-day are very different from what they were and still are in Oriental lands, so that here and now it would be unusual to be expected to entertain strangers; nevertheless, all who are of the Lord's true people should be on the look-out to entertain hospitably any servants of the Lord, who they are sure carry his message, the Gospel of the Kingdom. And, as the Apostle indicates, they should be just as careful not to entertain, not to assist, and not to bid God-speed to any who are bearing a false gospel, and denying that the Lord bought us. – 2 John 10.

REJOICE IN THINGS UNSEEN.

When the seventy returned from this mission they were full of joy; saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, in thy name." Our Lord assured them that this was what he expected, and intended, when he sent them forth, and explained respecting his own knowledge of Satan in his pre-human condition, that there and then he had been a witness to Satan's fall from high glory and privilege and position to his present attitude of chief adversary of God. "I beheld Satan as lightning [as a bright one] fall from heaven." It is for those who deny the personality of Satan and who deny there are any fallen angels, to explain away these plain statements of Scripture. The true children of God, the true sheep who hear the voice of the Shepherd, will not be

deceived upon this point any more than upon others. What matters it to us that we did not see Satan fall from his glorious condition? Our Master did, and he has borne testimony, not only respecting Satan's personality, but also respecting his fall from brightness and honor. What is it to us that others deny that there are fallen angels, demons, who seek to impersonate the dead, through spiritualism, etc.? We have the Master's words, and the words of the apostles, to the contrary, and as true sheep we both hear and heed the Shepherd's voice and follow him. We heed not the voice of Satan, uttered through those whom he controls, telling us that there is no devil, that there is no Second Death, etc.

Our Lord proceeded to tell the seventy that it was he who had given them the power they had enjoyed, and that it included immunity from the bites of serpents and scorpions, and from all the power of the enemy – all enemies, but specially the enemy, Satan: the same one mentioned also in the prayer which our Lord taught, saying, "Deliver us from the Evil One." It may not be amiss to note here the fact that these powers and authorities over Satan, poisons, serpents, etc., were confined to the twelve and to the subsequent seventy, and were never given to the Church in general. The only Scripture which even seems to so imply is Mark 16:9 to the end, and these verses are not found in the oldest Greek MSS., and are evidently interpolations, added probably about the fifth century: they are omitted from the Revised Version and others. But while no such immunity from poisons and bites and stings are granted to the Gospel Church in general, we have what serves every purpose in this respect; *viz.*, the Lord's promise that nothing shall by any means *hurt us* as new creatures, – that the Lord will permit nothing to happen to his consecrated ones that he is not both able and willing to overrule for their *good*, their highest welfare.

While rejoicing with the disciples in their increased faith and joy, resulting from their activities in his service, and in the exercise of the gifts which he had bestowed upon them, our Lord cautioned them against *thinking too highly* of such miraculous gifts, and assures them

that their chiefest cause for joy lay in another direction – in the fact that they had been accepted as sons into God's family (John 1:12); in the fact that their names were written in heaven, as prospective joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom – prospective members of the body of Christ, to suffer with him, and thus attest their fidelity, and by and by to be glorified with him to all eternity. This is in harmony with the Apostle Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 13:1, where he assures us that the miraculous gifts conferred upon the early Church by the laying on of the apostles' hands, such as speaking with unknown tongues, interpretations of mysteries, etc., are not proofs of spirit-begotten conditions; – that a greater proof is the possession of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love that never faileth.

The more of the spirit of love we possess the greater is our likeness to God's dear Son, our Redeemer, and the more will we be fitted and prepared for a share with him in his heavenly glories. If, therefore, the Lord permits us to do some little service in the present harvest, or to bear some burdens in the heat of the day, or if he grants us the privilege of successfully contending against the great Adversary and his servants, and *hinders us from being stung* or "hurt" by their words or looks or deeds, and if he grants us opportunities for helping others out of soul-sickness by administering the good medicine of the present truth, let us rejoice in these privileges and opportunities; but let us rejoice still more that under the Lord's providence we are his children, begotten of his spirit, – that our names have been recorded as members of his family, and that by and by we may expect to be joint-heirs with our Elder Brother. Yea, in these good hopes we will rejoice.

