

Following Christ Through The Gospels

Part Five

In our last study we highlighted the emphases of Biblical evangelism as given to the twelve disciples. A further seventy disciples were commissioned and sent into the 'harvest field' (Lk. 10). Notice that Christ's programme of evangelism doesn't change, - whether it's for twelve or seventy (*or seventy-two*)! They returned to the Master with great delight, - such was their overwhelming joy as they returned to Jesus (Lk. 10:17). He made a very interesting statement in light of their experiences, compare Lk. 10:18 with Is. 14:15 and Rev. 12:9. Notice too that Paul's experience in Acts 28:3ff. Was somewhat similar to what is mentioned in Lk. 10:19, as well as Mk. 16:18.

During this time John the Baptist had been taken prisoner. On hearing of Christ's work he despatched two of his own disciples to verify the validity or otherwise of Jesus' ministry (Mt. 11:2ff.). he wanted to find out if the Messiah had come (Lk. 7:20). Being suitably satisfied they returned to John to report their findings. On their departure Jesus commended John's witness to the people who had come to Him for healing and compared John to the 'Elijah' of Malachi 4:5. Consequently, many of the 'ordinary' people were baptised with John's baptism, - but not the Pharisees! (Lk. 7:29-30)

Then, as Jesus surveyed the crowd and the kind of people that were coming to Him, we almost feel a note of despair from the lips of the Saviour. The people from towns such as Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were blind to the fact of Who He really was (Mt. 11:16-24; Lk. 10:13-16). How dark a picture and how hopeless would His mission have been were it not for the Sovereignty of God and the Divine electing love of His Father from before the foundation of the world. (See Mt. 11:25-30 and Lk. 10:21f.). in particular, note the words found in Mt. 11:27 and Lk. 10:22, "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he to whom the Son will reveal him.*")

Meanwhile, a violent and bloody uprising in the Galilee region had been quelled by Pontius Pilate (Lk. 13:1). (The Galileans had a reputation for rebellion and a disregard for some of the Jewish law, see Acts 5:37). There was also an horrible accident at a tower in Siloam (in southern Jerusalem) when it fell and killed eighteen people (Lk. 13:4). Was it because these people were sinners? "No!" said Jesus, and He went on to warn His inquisitors, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 8:5). As He continued to teach in the synagogue a woman, severely paralysed, asked for His healing. He subsequently granted her request. However, the ruler of the synagogue and other *notabilia* chastised Him for contravening the Sabbath. He duly rounded on their hypocrisy and left them to soak in their own embarrassment (Lk. 13:10-17).

To make matters worse, - in the eyes of the Pharisees, -the hungry disciples, as they walked through the fields picked the ears of corn and ate them. According to their law, this was work! (Dt. 23:25). Jesus put them right, as He quoted the Old Testament (I Sam. 21:6ff.; Num. 28:9).

On another Sabbath, again in a synagogue, the rulers tried to catch Him out (Mt. 12:9-13; Mk. 3:1-5; Lk. 6:6-10). A man had a withered hand, was it lawful to heal him on the Sabbath? Again Christ reiterated the fact that they would pull an animal out of a ditch, - that was considered work. How then could these rulers satisfactorily chide Christ for healing this man with the withered hand? They couldn't answer Him, but they weren't pleased! They held a meeting *in the secrecy of their 'backrooms'* to see how they could orchestrate His destruction (Mt. 12:14; Mk. 3:6; Lk. 6:11). Old enemies, - the Pharisees and the Herodians, - were united in a common cause against Christ!

Rather than become embroiled in their evilness Jesus left the oecumenical amalgam to their 'skulduggery' and He went down to the Sea of Galilee to continue His ministry, ... and the crowds followed Him (Mk. 3:7-12).