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## Luke 9:51-10:20 – Jesus Heads to Jerusalem (the Cross)

**“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” -- Jesus, Luke 10:16**

Last week we looked at Jesus’ first mention of the cross, amid references to His upcoming Passion—the suffering foretold in the book of Isaiah which culminates with the cross of Calvary. **Read 9:51-62**; Jesus “set His face to go to Jerusalem”. This indicates that according to the timeline set by the Father, Jesus must now head resolutely to Jerusalem and all that awaits Him there. The gospel writer Luke departs from the other synoptic gospels (Matthew and Mark) in the next 9 chapters to describe the last year of Jesus’ ministry, accounts he likely discovered in his research and interviews. The direct route from Galilee to Judah in the south runs through Samaria, but the Samaritans reject Jesus because He is headed to Jerusalem. It is hard to appreciate how much the Jews and Samaritans hated each other over ethnic, social, and religious differences, but Jerusalem, as the location of the temple, was especially a place where Samaritans knew they were not welcome. Thus, Jesus, the One who came to erase barriers between people, finds Himself rejected (again).

The brothers James and John think a swift and fiery retribution is in order but receive rebuke instead. It is clear the brothers are motivated by their bias against Samaria (after all, there was no call to demolish Nazareth when Christ was rejected there (Luke 4:28-30)). Jesus will address this prejudice in a parable we will see next week but for now He reminds them He came to save. What they had in mind clearly references the account of the Sodom and Gomorrah judgments of Genesis 18-19. Dr Luke weaves that subtext in this week’s passage.

As they traveled, others express desires to follow Him, but not to bear the cost of doing so. The first seems dissuaded by the fact Jesus, the creator of the cosmos, has no home; a second desires to bury his father (a seemingly reasonable request on the face of it, until we realize what he really means is “let me go home until my father dies, so I can get my inheritance!”); the third states he wants to say farewell to those at home, subtly elevating those relationships above one with Christ. Jesus calls those who will begin the work and maintain it without regrets. To “look back” in verse 62 implies there is a wistful longing for something other than the mission, and is reminiscent of Lot’s wife in Genesis 19:26, who looked back to her previous life in disobedience of the angelic instructions. Christ seeks obedient followers, who plow a straight line ahead.

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Our desire is to witness God’s work in transforming hearts.  
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Back in Ch 9 we saw Jesus send the Twelve out, with His power; now in Ch 10 we see 72 commissioned to go out ahead of Him as heralds of the king and to teach and heal. **Read 10:1-20.** Now, some manuscripts list the number as 70, which if preferred makes an interesting parallel to understand the movement of Jesus' ministry. He began teaching by Himself, as the second Adam, He alone conducted the ministry. But as Adam needed a helper in the form of his bride, Jesus desires a bride—His church. The church began with the 12 disciples just as Israel began with 12 tribal heads (the Patriarchs). By the end of Genesis, there are 70 people who move out of Canaan into Egypt (Gen 46:27), and when Moses leads several million people out in the Exodus, the LORD commands Moses to appoint 70 advisors (Numbers 11:16). In our text, Jesus follows the same pattern and expands the ministry messaging and healing by appointing 70 (or 72) to go out, two-by-two, with specific instructions. They go to harvest as "lambs in the midst of wolves" (10:3), seemingly unprotected and without provisions, moving quickly without baggage and without salutations along the road, seeking supporters in each village on the way to house and feed them for their wages. This begins the idea of compensating those who bring the Word. When they are received, they will be able to heal sickness as Jesus did. But when they get rejected because of their ministry, they are to shake off the dust and warn that city about missing the kingdom of God. Jesus even compares the fate of Sodom as better than any town that rejects His coming.

Jesus then singles out the unrepentant cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all located near each other on the Sea of Galilee, in each He spent a great deal of time. The woes He pronounces are especially damning when He states that if two Phoenician coastal cities, Tyre and Sidon, had seen such divine works they would have already repented in sackcloth and ashes! To state that Gentile cities would fare better in judgment than Jewish cities would have generated a lot of negative discussion. But Jesus' message is clear: when He sends out ministers on a mission, they represent Jesus and the Father, a fact still true today. We must be careful how we treat anyone properly ministering the Word of God.

When the large group of missionaries return, there is great joy that even demons, those Jesus called wolves in v 3, had to submit to them in the name of Jesus. There is great power in the Name. Jesus' response gives a glimpse into the spiritual war between God's angels and the demonic world: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven". Jesus is an eyewitness account to the veracity of both Satan's existence and his fall from the heavenly courts. In other words, Jesus saw Satan cast down, so it is not surprising that Satan's followers are also cast out. And perhaps there is a subtle warning that the 70 do not fall into the same prideful trap that Satan did (see 1 Tim 3:6). The focus here is on Jesus' supreme authority which He shares in part with His followers, which should make us fearless. He sent them out as lambs but they were never unprotected. By His authority, we can be impervious to any attack of our enemy and his minions. However, more important than that is the joy we have in salvation, wherein our names are added to the book of life in heaven (Rev 20:11-15). Creating spiritually alive beings from spiritually dead ones is a greater miracle than controlling a demon.

**Questions To Ponder Further:** *It seems churches have increasingly shied away from "fire and brimstone" messages, but the Bible does not. There is a very real war in the spiritual realm, fighting it out all around us. Wouldn't you like to know what is true? When confronted with what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, and what is foretold to happen in Revelation 20, take warning. Seek first the kingdom of God!*

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