

In the first half of this chapter, Jesus gives His twelve disciples the power and authority to heal and cast out demonic spirits before sending them to preach throughout the region. Later, they witnessed Jesus feeding a crowd of over 5,000 people. Between these events, however, the question was raised of Who Jesus was, exposing the contradiction between popular opinion and Jesus' true identity as the Christ, the Son of God.

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.
2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

“Then he called his twelve disciples together” – This is obviously not a generic reference to the large number of people who followed Jesus as He traveled around preaching. These are the twelve that He specifically chose to be His apostles after a full night of prayer (Luke 6:12-16).

“and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases” – These twelve men were given authority to cast out demonic spirits and the power to cure people of their health problems. It's worth noting that Jesus did not give these gifts/responsibilities to all believers. Jesus had prayed all night to determine His Father's will as to who would receive them.

“And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” – They were sent throughout the land preaching the kingdom of God. The ability to heal the sick and cast out demonic spirits was a validation that their message was from God and demonstrated their association with Jesus, Who also did these things.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

“And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey” – Jesus instructed them on how to prepare for their journey. When we prepare to go on a journey (such as a vacation), we like to pack everything that we anticipate that we'll need. We bring clothes, money, toiletries and other supplies. Jesus gave the opposite instructions to the disciples – they were to take nothing.

“neither staves, nor scrip [wallet], neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece” – They are not to take anything but the clothes on their back. Neither were they to carry spare clothes, food, money, etc. They were to trust that God would provide for all of their needs during their journey.

“And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart” – They were to accept the hospitality offered by the people of the town they were visiting, but once they accepted someone's offer of lodging, they were not to leave that house and go to another when they seemed to get a “better” offer of a place to stay. They were to show gratitude for the hospitality shown to them.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. 6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

Jewish travelers would often shake the dust off their feet when they returned home from traveling through Gentile territory in order to symbolically show their rejection of Gentile uncleanness. Jesus was suggesting that any city that did not accept their presence or their message was no better than unbelieving Gentiles and should be treated accordingly. Shaking the dust off of their feet outside the city as they left would be a testimony that this city had rejected the gospel.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; 8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

Herod was hearing the reports of Jesus and of the preaching and the miracles that He was performing. However, the various theories about Who Jesus was and where He came from had bewildered Herod. One theory was that Jesus was a resurrected John the Baptist, while other theories identified Jesus as one of the prominent OT prophets who had risen from the dead.

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

Mark makes Herod's guilty conscience for killing John the Baptist more evident (**Mark 6:16** “*But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead*”). Herod knew that John was dead, so he was likely more afraid of a resurrected John than he was of John when he was still alive.

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

After Luke's parenthetical description of Herod's interest in Jesus, he tells us of the return of the disciples from their preaching and healing mission. They excitedly tell Jesus about everything that had happened since they left. Knowing that they were tired from their journey, Jesus takes them to a secluded place near to Bethsaida, a town on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee near where the Jordan River flows into the lake. His intention was to find a place where they could rest.

11 And the people, when they knew *it*, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

It did not take long for the news to spread that Jesus was in the area, so the people started gathering around Him. Despite wanting the disciples (and likely Himself) to have an opportunity to rest, He did not turn them away. Instead, He welcomed them and began teaching them about the kingdom of God and healing those who were in need of it.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

Perhaps the twelve disciples were eager for the crowd to leave so that they could rest or perhaps they were genuinely concerned for the welfare of the people. As evening was nearing the disciples used it for an excuse to urge Jesus to dismiss the crowd. The fact that they were in a “desert” (the Greek word means “uninhabited”) place meant that there were few resources around with which to feed the people, so the disciples suggested that Jesus send the people away to seek their own place to lodge for the night and get something to eat.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

“But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat” – Jesus compassionately did not want to send the people away hungry, but He also wanted the disciples to learn from this experience. Thus He gives the disciples the responsibility of feeding these people in order to test their faith (**John 6:6** “*And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do*”).

“And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people” – The disciples evaluate the situation with logical but natural eyes. They discover that a boy had brought some food for himself (John 6:9), but they recognized the impossibility of feeding this large crowd of people with only five loaves and two fish unless they could supplement it with food purchased at a nearby town. Jesus and the twelve likely did not have the money to buy that much food. The size of the loaves and the fish were likely small, just enough for the boy to eat for a meal, or at best, for the day.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

“For they were about five thousand men” – Matthew says this number did not include women and children (Matt. 14:21), so the actual number of people could easily be double that number and some commentators suggest that there could have been as many as 20,000 people.

“And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down” – Presumably, this was done to make it easier to systematically distribute the food. It would also make counting the people much easier.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Jesus broke the bread and fish into pieces and passed them to the disciples to distribute to the people. No matter how many pieces He gave out, He still had bread and fish left. There was enough that everyone was able to satisfy their hunger. In fact, there was more leftover food than they started with. The “baskets” referred to small wicker baskets that the Jews used to carry food, perhaps a lunchbox sized amount of food – one for each of the disciples.

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

Apparently the crowds had now left and Jesus was taking advantage of the solitude to pray. When He finished, He asked the twelve disciples a pointed question. What was the public’s opinion of Who Jesus was?

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

These were the same theories of Jesus’ identity that Herod had heard (v. 7-8). Apparently John the Baptist was the most popular opinion, but a significant number of people considered Jesus to be Elijah or another one of the OT prophets raised from the dead.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

“He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” – Here is the real reason that Jesus was asking the question. He wanted to see if the disciples would follow public opinion or if they understood Who He truly was.

“Peter answering said, The Christ of God” – Peter steps up and speaks for the group. Matthew quotes Peter’s full confession (**Matt. 16:16** “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*”). The title “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title “Messiah” Whose coming was predicted throughout the OT. Jesus stated that this knowledge had been supernaturally revealed to Peter by the Father (Matt. 16:17) since he could not have known this through human means.

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded *them* to tell no man that thing; 22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

The knowledge that Jesus was the Christ would be the central message that the apostles were to preach after His resurrection (Acts 1:8). Apparently, Jesus did not want to upset the timeline leading up to His crucifixion since it had to happen at a specific time (He was crucified at Passover). If the disciples had begun publicly spreading the word that Jesus was the Christ, it might have caused the Jews to seek to crucify Him prematurely and thus hamper His ability to accomplish all that His Father wanted Him to do. This seems to be the reason that Jesus informs the disciples of the suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection that He would have to endure.