

Using Methods of Interpretation

Instructions to Disciples: (Luke 9:1-6)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.' They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

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Read the above passage carefully and use the framework presented to analyse the passage using two methods of biblical interpretation.

Historical Criticism

Historical situation: out of which the writing arose and how it came to be written.

- Churches that had been established by Paul outside Palestine were struggling with the concepts of what it meant to be a Christian considering their poor relationship with Orthodox Judaism and the growing number of Gentile converts.

Date:

- Approximately 85 AD.

Place of composition:

- Not Palestine – there is poor knowledge of Palestinian geography.
- Internal evidence of Acts suggests that Luke is from Antioch which was the third largest city of the Roman Empire with a varied population including Jews.

Authorship:

- Since the latter half of the 2nd century it has been attributed to Luke a companion of Paul during his early missionary endeavours.

Method:

- A simple and straight forward telling of the commission of the twelve to go out like Jesus and in Jesus' name to preach the Good News with power and authority bestowed on them.

To whom the work was addressed:

- Those taking up discipleship who are preparing to go and preach the Good News of the Reign of God.

Circumstances that existed between the author and the audience:

- The author too has converted to be a follower of the Way and is demonstrating the cost of discipleship.

- Concludes a series of miracles and stories that illustrate Jesus' power and help to reveal his identity.
- Having demonstrated his power, Jesus now shares it with the Twelve by giving them authority over demons and sending them to preach the Good News and to heal.
- Sets the scene for questions about Jesus' identity that are resolved through his journey to and the events in Jerusalem.

Character portrayal and interaction:

- Jesus is portrayed as trusting of the twelve to do as he has done in proclaiming the Reign of God.
- Jesus is the only one that speaks but the twelve respond by going out and doing just as he says which means that they were successful.
 - The response to the commission is action preaching and healing.

Analyses of the plot:

- This scene focuses entirely on the authority of those Jesus sends to represent him and the reception they are likely to receive. The authority and power that they have is directly connected to preaching the Reign of God.
- Travelling without provisions makes these missionaries totally dependent on the hospitality of their listeners. At the Last Supper Jesus will recall these words and the disciples will note that they lacked for nothing (Luke 22:35).

Setting:

- Jesus has demonstrated his power and authority and chosen his apostles. The ministry of Galilee is coming to an end and Jesus is preparing his closest disciples for accompanying him on the journey to Jerusalem and to continue his work later.

The mood, how tension is introduced and resolved:

- The mood is one of expectation. Jesus is headed to Jerusalem where he will not be welcome.
 - The people who opposed Jesus were making it more difficult for him.

Meaning to the original audience:

- Luke is reminding the listeners that they were received by the people as Jesus was, with welcome and hospitality because they were disciples.
- Discipleship requires concentration on the mission, not on personal needs. Discipleship will not make you financially successful.

Meaning to people today:

- To be a disciple requires trust in the providence of God through the hospitality of others. The desire to be in control of all that is needed can get in the way of being open to preaching the Reign of God.

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To whom the work was addressed:

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Circumstances that existed between the author and the audience:

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The written and/or oral sources used by a biblical author:

- According to the author 'original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'-possibly the source of some of the material not drawn from Mark or 'Q'.
- 35% of Luke is material contained in the Gospel of Mark-with adaptation.

Historical and cultural settings:

- The 'twelve' had already been appointed earlier in the Galilee mission. The twelve recalls the twelve tribes of Israel. All the Jews are invited to be part of preaching the Reign of God, not just specialists or those of a certain tribe.
- 'Remain there' is to prevent the missionaries been considered wanderers and charlatans who were considered unacceptable to a village so would not be listen to.
- Jews always shook the dust off their feet when they returned from Gentile territory – if they are not made welcome disciples are to do the same. They had given people a chance to hear the Good News they are not responsible for their reaction and need to keep going on their mission.

Meaning to the original audience:

- To be a disciple means to have trust that God will provide what is needed. To be open to hospitality as disciples from those who wish to be part of the Reign of God.
- The rejection shown to Jesus will be experienced by his followers.
- The Good News is for the entire world and all people not just the local community of the Jewish people.

Meaning to people today:

- To respond to the call of Jesus requires that the disciple places trust in God that they have the power and authority to carry out the mission and need not worry about what they need.

Literary Criticism

Use of language:

- The word 'power' here would have been understood as the 'power' to work miracles, to be signs of God to the people.

Style:

- Bridging-Luke has demonstrated his power and authority. By recording the twelve being commissioned with this power and authority Luke is setting the scene for answering the question 'Who is Jesus'. The missionary activity of the twelve that is recorded here as successful enables Luke to demonstrate Jesus becoming more widely known so that people start questioning who he is including Herod. This leads into 'turning towards Jerusalem' where Jesus will ultimately answer the question through his death and resurrection.

Literary genres:

- Within the context of the Gospel genre a telling of the Good News.
- Narrative – it is telling the story of Jesus sending out the apostles to carry out his mission to the world.

Where it is in the text as a whole:

- A passage from the Gospel of Luke within the section of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee..This is the place in the Gospel where Luke places most of the account of Jesus' public ministry.

- Concludes a series of miracles and stories that illustrate Jesus' power and help to reveal his identity.
- Having demonstrated his power, Jesus now shares it with the Twelve by giving them authority over demons and sending them to preach the Good News and to heal.
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