

The Joy of God That Few Rejoice In (Luke 10:12-24)

1. The sorrowful state of those who reject God (v.10-16)

- “Woe” is mentioned twice (v.13) to describe a deep regret and warning. It is what is known as the accountability of opportunity.
- These “woes” are directed at two cities close to one another on the northern side of the Sea of Galilee: Chorazin and Bethsaida.
 - Chorazin is not mentioned in Scripture except in the parallel account (Matt. 11:21). Bethsaida is the hometown of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (Jn. 1:44). Jesus was there frequently (Mk. 6:45; 8:22; Lk. 9:10).
- Jesus did “mighty works” in both cities not recorded in Scripture (Jn. 21:25).
- He uses a second-class conditional statement: *if* the “mighty works” done in Chorazin and Bethsaida *were* done in Tyre and Sidon, they *would* have repented in sackcloth and ashes (v.14).
 - Tyre and Sidon were godless, prideful, and arrogant ancient cities in Phoenicia (current day Lebanon) that survived in the Promised Land, as Israel failed to drive them out (Isa. 23; Ezek. 26-28).
 - Crowds from Tyre and Sidon came to listen to Jesus (Matt. 15:24; Mk. 3:7-8). Jesus helped a Syrophenician woman and commended her for her faith (Matt. 15:21-28).
- Sodom was destroyed because of sexual immorality and perversion (Gen. 19; Deut. 29:23; Ezek. 16:48-50). Their judgment, however, will pale compared to Chorazin and Bethsaida, not necessarily because of the sin but the degree of revelation.
- The immediate context of the pronouncement of judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida is their refusal to receive not only the teaching of Jesus but also to believe that He was the Messiah, His miracles, and teachings. They refused to welcome Jesus and His disciples, just as the townsfolk in Sodom were unreceptive toward the friends of Lot who were in Sodom.
- Jesus’ woes can also include Capernaum, though not specifically stated as a “woe.”
 - Capernaum was the “headquarters” of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. These cities near Capernaum (Chorazin and Bethsaida) were flooded with revelatory light.
- Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum will all receive a weightier judgment than Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, because of the interplay of unrepentant sin, and rejection of divine revelation.
- Jesus uses a wordplay of “exaltation, Hades, and heaven” (v.15) alluding to the rebellion in heaven and the subsequent fall of Satan.

Hades means “unseen” or “the underworld.”

- In the OT, all souls descended into Sheol, while in the NT, it is more restrictive; it is the holding tank for unbelievers until the Great White Throne Judgment and Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:12-15).
- It is translated as hell (Ps. 16:10), the grave (Gen. 37:35), and the pit (Num. 16:30, 33). Abraham’s Bosom is a “compartment” in Sheol where the righteous saints (those of faith) entered when they died (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 10:4-10).
- The New Testament equivalence of Sheol is Hades, though Hades in the OT is where the unrighteous, who did not put their faith in YHWH, departed to when they died.
- There is a thematic allusion to the rebellion of heaven (presumably between the second and sixth day of creation):
 - Will Lucifer (Satan/ the Devil) ascend to heaven (Isa. 14:13-15)? No.
 - Will Capernaum ascend to the heavens? No.

*Those who are prideful and reject God’s gracious provision of revelation will be brought down.

God holds every man, woman, and child accountable to the degree of revelation they receive:

- to reject God, His message, and messenger is to align oneself with Satan and place oneself in the position of divine judgment, like Satan, his host, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin. Eternal punishment for those who reject God will be in proportion to sins committed and the degree of revelation: the greater the revelation of God, the greater will be the judgment.
- Scripture does not provide any additional details concerning the degree of punishment.

2. The joyful state of those who receive God (v.16-24)

- The seventy-two returned with a measure of “success” as they heralded the coming kingdom of God everywhere they went, performed exorcisms, and healed (supposedly) all who were willing.

Jesus comments on their mission, noting that He saw Satan “fall like lightning” (v.18):

- Until this point, Luke describes the evil one as the “devil” (4:2, 3, 5, 13; 8:12).
- This metaphor of “lightning” is an apocalyptic image that recalls the downfall of the king of Babylon (Isa. 14:13-15) and is used in Second Temple Jewish literature to describe the Fall of Lucifer, presumably after the second day of creation. It describes God’s uncompromising judgment on pride, especially that which affronts the preeminence of God.
- The Greek tense of “fall” connotes something that Jesus saw happening repeatedly over time, presumably during the mission of the seventy (two). The “fall” is emphatic, demonstrating a decisive victory. This downfall is not merely the result of the exorcisms and healing but the advancement of the kingdom of God.
- The present exorcisms were reenacting past, successive defeats since his failed *coupe de tat*, between the second day of creation and temptation in the Garden (Job 38:4; Gen. 3:1-6).

Jesus gave the seventy (two) tremendous authority and protection, as they were empowered to “tread on the serpent” and “the scorpions won’t hurt them” (v.19).

- Jesus uses the perfect tense in Greek, demonstrating the gift’s permanence (1 Pet. 1:3). Serpents and scorpions symbolize the devil and his minions as they are elusive and cunning creatures in Scripture (Rev. 9:1-4). Contextually, the seventy (two) are protected physically, but the implication is that salvation is invincible and is granted to those who take refuge in Him (Ps. 91:7-16). The snake symbolizes Satan (Gen. 3:1-15; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9, 14-15; 20:2).

The Joy of the Trinity (v.21-22):

A. *The Subject of Jesus’ rejoicing (the Father through the Holy Spirit):*

- There is an intimation of the Trinity, for Jesus’ Lordship (v.17) is combined with the Father and mediation of the Holy Spirit. The mention of the Holy Spirit is unprecedented, for there is no other parallel text exulting the Holy Spirit in all the NT to this degree.
- Jesus rejoices that the Father has handed all things to the Son, evident in the dismantling of the kingdom of darkness, ruled by Satan.

B. *The Substance of Jesus’ rejoicing (the doctrine of election):*

- “These things” (v.22) can be: (1) Jesus’ unique status as the only Son (Lk. 10:22), (2) the disciples’ privileged relationship to God through Jesus Christ (10:23-24), and/or (3) the presence of God’s kingdom and Satan’s fall (10:17-18).
- The “hidden” can be active, as in Pharaoh (Ex. 7:3; Mk. 4:10-12), or a passive concessive sense, in which God permits the arrogant to remain in their self-induced blindness.
- Theologians call this (1) single and double predestination, or (2) predestination and reprobation. In the latter, God “passes over” or “overlooks” the wicked instead of actively hardening.
- Jesus rejoices that the Father reveals matters about the kingdom to babes (infants), not the wise and understanding (1 Cor. 1:18-31); those who are child-like, not childish.
 - The verb “rejoice” in v.21 is a different Greek word than “rejoice” (twice) in v.20. The former is more intensive, which speaks of ecstatic exuberance.

The disciples are blessed for several reasons (v.20, 23-24):

(1) *Their names are written in heaven:* i.e., the Book of Life, which guarantees the security of the believer as a citizen of heaven, connecting predestination (13:8; 17:8), the record of one’s deeds (20:12), and eternal rewards (Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15).

(2) *They have received more power and revelation than their forefathers:* the prophets wrote about, and the kings longed to see the day in which they were prophesying (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The disciples are living in that day and, as a result, are blessed.