

## The Life of Jesus Christ: Part Two

### Our Lord's Public Ministry

#### II. The Galilean Ministry: The Sermon on the Mount A. The Choosing of the Twelve (Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16)

**Introduction:** Just prior to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus picks from among those who have been following Him twelve whom He would call *apostles*. Some of these men had been with Him for over a year, but the ones He called earlier (Peter, Andrew, James, John) have been with Him full time for the past 3-4 months, since February of AD 30.

Why is His choice of men remarkable? It is remarkable (1) because He chose a betrayer who was never a genuine believer; (2) because He chose men who were not remarkable (John MacArthur called his series on the disciples *Twelve Ordinary Men*), and (3) because He chose men from remarkably different backgrounds. So we learn that it is not what are when we get saved that makes us so useful to the Lord, but what He can make us by His grace, His Word, and the power of His Spirit at work inside of us.

<i>Listings of the Apostles</i>			
Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
first, Simon, who is called Peter	Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter	Simon, whom He also named Peter	Peter
Andrew his brother	James the son of Zebedee ... to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder	Andrew his brother	James
James the son of Zebedee	John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder	James	John
John his brother	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew the tax collector	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James the son of Alphaeus	James the son of Alphaeus	James the son of Alphaeus	James the son of Alphaeus
Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon called the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Canaanite	Simon the Cananite	Judas the son of James	Judas the son of James
Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him	Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him	Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor	

“12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to (up on) the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples (those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him) to Himself; and from them He chose (appointed) twelve whom He also named apostles (that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons): Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John (to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot (the Cananite); 16 Judas the son of James (Thaddaeus), and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.”

1. According to Luke 6:12 what preceded the Lord's choosing of His twelve disciples? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to (up on) the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” It was a choice based on earnest, prolonged prayer. The only reason we can ascribe to our Lord's actions is that it was necessary for Him to make the correct decision as to His choice, and prayer was necessary in order to do that. Jesus did not make correct choices because He was divine. He made correct choices because always followed the Father's will. On this occasion prayer was necessary in order to make the correct decision. More than that, *this kind of praying* was necessary in order to make the correct decision.

The need for preachers to take His place in carrying the message of the Kingdom to Israel and the Gentiles was critical, and while many may follow, there was need for a smaller group to receive more intensive instruction. Just as He had prayed at His baptism (3:21), so He prays again on the occasion of

this momentous decision.

His prayer on this occasion was (1) in solitude (*out to the mountain*). The definite article with this noun would seem to indicate a particular mountain, perhaps one Jesus resorted to frequently so that it was familiar to Him and the disciples.<sup>1</sup> He desired to be alone with His Father to ask for direction, prepare His own heart for the next day, pray for the men themselves whom He would choose, and for the ministries they would need to perform. His prayer was also (2) purposeful (*to pray*). He did not go out to have quiet, or to admire the sky, but for the purpose of seeking fellowship with His Father. Determination in prayer is important, because it keeps our hearts focussed when they might wander. Jesus knew that it was time to choose these men, and He knew that it was a choice that must be properly prayed over. His prayer was (3) prolonged (*continued all night*). This may have been because of the importance of the object sought, or because of the pleasure of the fellowship, or both.

2. According to Mark 3:13-14 from among what group did Jesus choose His apostles? \_\_\_\_\_  
“... and when it was day, He called His disciples (those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him) to Himself; and from them He chose (appointed) twelve whom He also named apostles.” In the morning, He called His disciples to Him. These were the ones, Mark says, he wanted (*yelw*). There was a larger group waiting on him, maybe as many as several hundred. From these He called those He wanted, perhaps 20-50. And from those He actually chose twelve. That is, the choice of who would be disciples was a sovereign choice as well as a prayerful choice. He chose 12 (*eklegomai*) and appointed them (*poiew*) to be apostles and named them (*onomazw*) apostles. Why? Because apostles are messengers, those appointed to a task, and sent forth to accomplish that appointed task. That is why they were so named. Notice that they did not volunteer, but they were assigned to this task, which they apparently accepted.

3. According to Mark 3:14 what was the purpose of their being apostles? \_\_\_\_\_  
“... that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons ...” The purpose of their being apostles was threefold: (1) to be with Christ full time; (2) to go out and preach; and (3) to exercise miraculous power.

The Christian church has at various times claimed an apostolic succession. What is that? It is the belief that this first commission from Jesus was passed down from generation to generation to the present day. The Romanists believe that it accounts for the preservation of the infallibility of the papacy. This, they believe, assures the purity of the doctrine which Jesus delivered to the apostles. Apostolic succession was not believed until the end of the third century AD, when the Gnostic church claimed to possess secret knowledge handed down in succession to them from Jesus. That succession, the Catholics claimed, was preserved in the bishops of Rome. However, there is no Biblical evidence that Jesus intended this commission to be extended to any beyond these twelve, and there is no explanation for why this doctrine was never believed until the third century.

Their first task as apostles was to be with Jesus (*ina wsin met autou*). This speaks of constant, close communion. This was to be the case for the next two years especially, as He taught them how their missionary endeavours were to be carried out after He left. While this was literally true of them, there is also an application for servants of Christ today. We have need to spend much time with Him in prayer and in the Word, and imbibe much of His spirit so that we can adequately perform the ministry He has appointed us to.

Their second task was to preach (*kai ina apostellh autouv khrussein*). They would learn how to preach from Him, and then he would send them out to do this. This was not specifically evangelistic preaching, but it was simply the proclamation of the truth of all Scripture. From being with Him to being with men. So it is with today's pastor. His main work is preaching. “*This must ever be his principle work, and receive the greatest part of his thoughts.*” (Ryle)

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<sup>1</sup> Lenski suggests that it might be the mount on which the sermon was preached immediately after this (p. 335). The definite article is also used in Mark 3:13 of the mountain where Jesus chose the disciples. The place where He prayed for them was the place where He chose them.

Their third task was to exercise supernatural power in healing the sick and casting out demons. Why? This activity authenticated the ministry as being divine, but this was necessary because the Church was a new institution, and it is not to be carried into our exercise of ministry today. Modern pastors must do good and show compassion to those in need, but this is quite different from what they were doing then.

4. For the sake of expedience we will divide the list given here into three groups of four apostles.<sup>2</sup> What was the occupation of the first four? \_\_\_\_\_

*“Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John (to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder).”* They were all four fishermen. These were among the specially called men earlier, and they came to be an “inner circle” of disciples (except Andrew sometimes) who experienced things the other disciples did not (eg. the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the Transfiguration, the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:3) and in Gethsemane).

Though Peter always comes first, he was not above the other apostles in position or power. Peter is called Simon when we first meet him but in Matthew 16 Jesus changes his name to Peter (Greek) or Cephas (Aramaic) which means Rock. We remember him most for speaking his mind, and for denying his Lord. We have the very telling story in Galatians 2 where Paul has to withstand Peter to his face because he was doing the wrong thing. He is probably the one who dictated to Mark the second gospel.

Andrew grew up in the hard-working atmosphere of a fisherman's home. He must have been of a serious mindset, because when we first meet him, he is attending the preaching of John the Baptist, and he is called one of John's disciples. It seems that the most significant thing about this man was that he was Peter's brother. Indeed, he always seems to be always under the shadow of his more gifted brother. Matthew 10:2 *“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother....”* But if it was Peter who was the spokesman for the disciples, it was Andrew who spoke to Peter. If Peter could move multitudes, it was Andrew who could move Peter (Roy Laurin).

James was the first of these four to die (Acts 12). His name usually occurs before John’s probably because James was ... the elder of the two.

John was *“the disciple whom Jesus loved.”* He outlived all the apostles, being exiled to Patmos in, history tells us, about his 90<sup>th</sup> year. James and John are called Boanerges, Sons of Thunder. Why? Though it may have reference to their mighty eloquence, or a rebuke for some emotional outburst (as in Luke 9:54), it probably has reference to their impetuous zeal for Christ (Hiebert). John wrote the fourth gospel, three epistles, and the last book of the NT.

5. The next four men are not so well known as the first four. What are the distinguishing characteristics of these four men? \_\_\_\_\_

*“Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas.”* The first five disciples were all acquaintances of each other. John 1:44 states: *“Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.”* John, Andrew and Peter found Jesus, but it was Jesus Who found Philip (John 1:43). Philip then finds Nathanael and brings him to Christ (John 1:45-46). Jesus tested Philip at the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:5, 7). John’s gospel records most of what we know of Philip (12:21-22, 14:8-9).

Bartholomew of the other gospels is probably Nathanael of John 1. Everything we know about him is recorded in John 1:45-51. He was the one Israelite Jesus commended for being guileless. His name always appears next to Philip, likely because Philip was the one to bring him to Christ.

Matthew, of course, is Levi the tax collector, whom the Lord called in Matthew 9 (Mark 2). He is also the author of the first gospel.

The one thing we know most clearly of Thomas is that he doubted the Lord’s resurrection (John 20). However, we forget that He was a twin (the meaning of Didymus), that he wanted to die with Lazarus (John 11:16), and that he questioned the Lord before His famous declaration in John 14:6.

6. The last four are the least known (except for Judas Iscariot). What do we know of them? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> It is tempting (as Barclay, Lockyer) to resort to the wealth of extra-biblical information about the Twelve. Not only, however, is much of it of dubious veracity, but it is not part of the inspired record, which makes it of limited value for our present task, even if it proved to be true.

*“James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot (the Cananite); 16 Judas the son of James (Thaddaeus), and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.”* James the son of Alphaeus is only mentioned in the four lists of the apostles. It seems strange that all we know of one of the faithful apostles is his name. But we do know his father’s name. You remember that in Mark 2:14 Matthew was called to follow Jesus. As Jesus passed by, He saw Levi the *son of Alphaeus* sitting at the tax office, and Jesus said to him, Follow me. And Levi did. Some (Barclay) have maintained that on this ground Levi and James were brothers, and their names do occur next to each other in Matthew’s list and in the list in Acts. However, Alphaeus was a common name (Hiebert), and there is simply no designation (as with James and John, Peter and Andrew) that these men were brothers.

Simon is called the Zealot and the Caananite, but the second term is not a reference to his place of origin. The term (*Kananithv* in the TR, *Kananaiov* in the ET). Canaanite was the Aramaic name for the Zealotes. This political party was radically dedicated to Jewish nationalism, arising as it did with the rebellion of a man named Judas about AD 6 and continuing until the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that we have a radical anti-Roman and a tax collector for Rome in the same band of brothers.

Judas the son of James, and Thaddeus and Labbaeus are all apparently names for the same man. Again, very little is recorded of him, except for what we have in John 14:22 *“Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”* Judas is thinking of the glorious appearing of Christ, and of what Jesus said back in verse 19, and wondering how He could appear in His glory, and not be seen by others. But the revelation Jesus is speaking of is internal, through the Spirit, and not in His final glory.

The last apostle named is always Judas Iscariot, the only non-Galilean in the group. He was the keeper of the money-bag, and the one who sold the Lord to the Sanhedrin for the price of a slave.

Conclusion: A stranger group of companions of the Lord can hardly be imagined. But one thing animated them, love for Christ (except one). These are the men who carried the gospel to all parts of the known world. We are not all the same, but we all love the Master.

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<sup>3</sup> T. L. Donaldson (in the new *ISBE*, volume 4) claims that the party was not established until late in the first century, and that this Simon was called Zealot for his Christian zeal.