

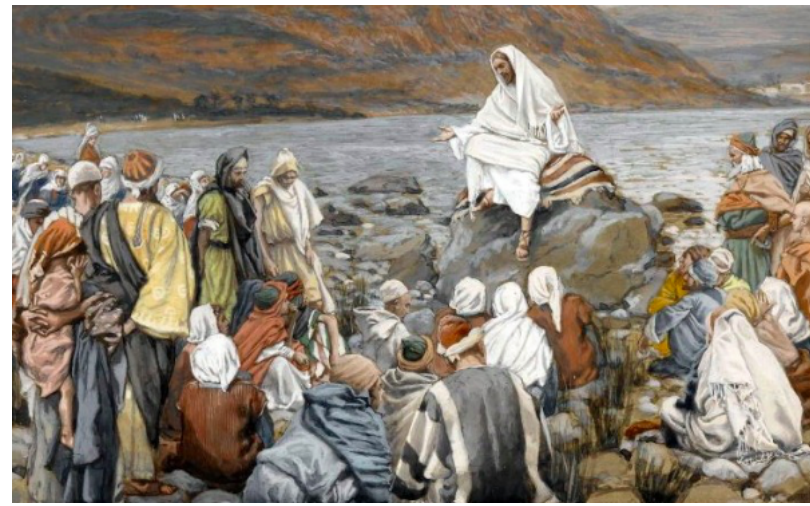
Gospel of Matthew

10:1-8

freely!



Matthew begins this next section by telling us that Jesus called His disciples to a special meeting where He gave 12 of them the mantle of His authority! This is a benchmark event in their development as disciples and future church leaders.



We cannot know if this mtg was just for the 12 or for many more with only the 12 mentioned. I strongly suspect that is a larger meeting but only 12 are chosen. Many more could have been there and we are just not being told.

Luke tells us that Jesus made this move after spending the entire night in prayer – a detail that Matthew omits. In the morning, Luke says, Jesus called his disciples and this sending out occurred. In each of the synoptic gospels, Judas is singled out in the narrative as being chosen and as being the one that would be a future traitor to them all!

Let's focus this morning on what we know about the men Jesus hand picks as the 12. Also, speaking of Judas, remember that there is no indication that Jesus withheld apostolic power to preach, prophesy, and heal from Judas, a man that was chosen for his character *deficiencies*, traits that would eventually begin the final steps of Jesus to the cross. This reminds us that Judas was a respected member of this group - his character unimpeachable!



He is mentioned as the “betrayer” in all 3 accounts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but none of them say that the apostolic authority given Judas was any less than that given any of the other of the 12! I think that is phenomenal! Here was a wolf in sheep's clothing, placed among the sheep, and placed there knowingly by Jesus! To the best of our knowledge, Judas received power to preach, prophesy, and heal just like everyone else. He fit right in. But, from the beginning, He was not actually one of them. He had a secret inner conversation, that was quite different from the conversation that was going on in the minds and souls of the other disciples! It is a bit bone chilling if you think of it! But also a head scratcher that Jesus also washed the feet of this man during that famous foot washing scene in which he washed the feet of all the 12 disciples.

The others had sold out to Jesus, while Judas would sell Him out. Judas had a “what’s in it for me” outlook – a innate skepticism regarding Jesus that he

from the others

There may have
during this incident,
thought that he



how could he have gone out and performed wondrous things under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit when the 12 are sent out in the Name of Jesus to preach the gospel!

It was either that or he cleverly relied upon his partner to do the “heavy lifting”, so to speak, during their missionary excursion, where he could have skillfully lagged behind the disciple he was paired with, staying to the shadows in more of a support role.



In contrast to Judas, **PETER** is listed first in all the synoptic gospels, and in the book of Acts. He was part of Jesus' inner circle of four, which included his brother Andrew and the brothers John and James (the older). When Jesus called Peter to follow Him, Peter was a fisherman. [Luke 5:1-11]

All of the inner 4 had been fishermen. From the beginning Peter becomes the perceived leader of the 12.

When Peter is introduced to Jesus, Jesus renames him – changing his name from Simon to Peter (Cephas) or “a rock”, which is interesting, because he appears to be anything but! He is a man who ask questions out of a seemingly constant state of bewilderment around Jesus. He is always struggling to keep up, to grasp the true meaning of what He is hearing and seeing and contrasting it with what he thought was truth! He blurts out claims or conclusions before truly considering their wisdom, and is prone to blundering because of impulsiveness. But there is a good side to this trait also. He will be the first and only one of the 12 to climb out of the wildly rocking boat to attempt to walk on the chaotic seas to meet Jesus! In one of his most famous moves, he will one day deny Jesus vehemently and repent deeply and bitterly! Peter, we know for sure, was a married man (Matt. 8). 1 Cor. 9:5 mentions that as other apostles did, he took his believing wife along with him on some of his journeys to visit various gentile churches.

Although he was a devout Jew, Peter will also be instrumental in his acceptance of the Apostle Paul's contention that God's plan all along had been that the Gospel of Jesus would become the possession of the world of the Gentiles.

Peter's brother, **ANDREW**, according to the Gospel account of is the one who first introduced brother Peter to Jesus. **[John 1:35-42]**

So Andrew could possibly be the first disciple that is convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Promised One, who was finally arrived in Israel in their lifetimes! We see that he is there right at the beginning when the prophet John declares Jesus to be "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*", revealing that he began as a disciple of John the Baptist. But from that moment, Andrew begins to follow Jesus. After spending that first day with Jesus, he went and found his brother Peter, declares to him that he has found the Messiah, and introduces Peter to Jesus for the first time. When Jesus finds the brothers on the sea shore with their boat, and calls them to follow Him, it is not their first encounter.

Andrew is not the jealous type and seems to readily accept a subservient role to that of his brother, Peter. The only other mention of Andrew in the scriptures is when the multitude gets hungry after having followed Jesus into the desert, and it is Andrew that brings a child to Jesus whose mother had evidently had the foresight to pack her boy a lunch of a few loaves of bread and some pre-cooked fish.



John and James are called “the Sons of Zebedee”, and their mother was Salome, a female disciple of Jesus who was there at his crucifixion and with the women who discovered that He was risen. These brothers, too, are former fishermen – fishing partners, according to Luke’s account, with Peter and Andrew. Jesus calls them “*Sons of Thunder*”, indicating that they were high-spirited young men, with rash moments of great passion, and perhaps were in their youth given to loud declarations, or angry outbursts! They were typical young Galilean men, looking for a cause and just about anything anti-Roman would have been to them, worth investigation. Galileans of that day had a reputation for insurrection and these brothers fit that stereotype. If they were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised One of God, then they expected that He would put them at the forefront of a rebellion that would not only expel the Romans, but supplant them forever as *THE* world power!



John self-testifies in his gospel that he was especially loved by Jesus. We have no reason to doubt him. Jesus seemed to have invested extra time with his inner circle of whom John was one.

Salome, his mother actually requested of Jesus that her sons be given the pre-eminent position of being seated next to Him when He came to power, but Jesus refused to commit and



launched instead into a lecture on the upside-down world of the future Kingdom of God where first would be last and the last would first!

John could evidently be vindictive and given to zealotry (not a good thing), like the time Jesus and His large entourage of disciples were passing through a Samaritan village on the way to Jerusalem and were refused hospitality – because they worshipped in Jerusalem and not Gerizim where the Samaritans worshipped. So incensed over this disrespect shown to the Lord from people that every real Jew considered religiously and morally inferior, John seriously asked Jesus if he should call down fire from heaven against the town! He received a stern rebuke from the Lord who simply moved Himself and His entourage on to the next town.

When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, led by Judas the betrayer, when Jesus made it clear He did not intend to resist, the other disciples ran, but John stuck around a little too long and was grabbed and almost held by a soldier. But he twisted and pulled with all his strength, until his robe unraveled, he fled virtually naked into the night, leaving only his garment in the hands of the would-be captors! But, by his own account, he was also the only one of the 11 disciples that was present at the crucifixion of Jesus. He was standing with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and many other grieving disciples who, it seems, were at least predominantly women. It was actually a pretty audacious move on John's part as there would have been arrest warrants out on the heads of all of the 12 disciples.



There, from up on the cross, Jesus gave John instructions to adopt His mother, Mary, and for Mary to adopt John as a son, and so He entrusted the care of her to him, over and above her own remaining sons. After that time, John took Mary into his own home. That is a sure measure of the highest degree of trust accorded John by Jesus.

John would go on to write a gospel record separate from that of the synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who all shared material extensively. John's writings would be much more mystical in nature than the others. He would also write 3 very helpful but brief letters to the churches, and of course, in his old age, he would pen the frightening but ultimately hopeful book of Revelation - often called John's "apocalypse" because it deals with the end of the world as we know it, the end of the seemingly endless and unhelpful conflict with Satan and his forces, and the final resolution of all things human. It is a strange and frightening book, like the person that wrote it was on a wild LSD trip! And please don't let anyone convince you differently – It is saying something important, but it is like a door without a key. No one knows the true meaning behind what much of it is actually saying. People have been trying to figure it out for 2 millennium without definitive success!

[Read poem - "The War" - Rev. 12] While much of the Revelations after chapter 3 is impossible to discern, there are a few things that are quite apparent truths/meanings, like final judgment, hell, and a *new* heaven and earth when the dust settles!



The War - [Rev. 12] by Kurt Hettinga

In heav'n a great and wondrous sign - was suddenly beheld
A woman clothed with sun and moon -and crowned with stars of 12
She's caught in throes of child birth - and cries aloud in pain.
But then another sign appeared - so fearsome when it came



A dragon there, a king of sorts - that towered in the night
With seven heads that weaved and danced - a terrifying sight
And on His heads lay 7 crowns - 10 horns protruding 'round,
And a tail with which he swept the heav'ns – a third cast to the ground

In anger did the crimson snake – bring terror to the earth
Cast down from heav'n he came to wait - the babe of priceless worth
Intending to devour him - but it could never be
The babe was snatched up to the throne - and heav'ns company

And there broke out in heav'n a war - where Michael's angels feud
With Satan and his minions bold - but heav'n could not be moved,
So overcome by heav'n's guard - the dragon is cast out
Thrown down to earth, oh wretched day - for he is still about

Deceiver of the nations here- accuser of the saints
He wages war on suffering earth - with fearful threats and feints
But the dragon's heads are thwarted by - the heroes of the faith
By Jesus blood, by martyrdom, and truth - they are his wraith!

For a time, times, and a half a time - the woman is protected
But the dragon is relentless too - and soon she is detected
But she is given eagles wings - to flee and soar away
To her desert place of refuge - to the dragon's great dismay

But once again he tries anew,- by opening his jaws
And from it springs a raging flood - to serve his murderous cause
But earth abnormally awakes - to take the woman's side
And opens up to swallow all - the dragon can provide

The dragon finally trounces off - to war against her clans
And every soul that cherishes - the words of God's commands
And upon the Gospel lovers strong - he will wreak his ugly spree.
So finally, upon the shore - he stares across the sea.



James, John's brother, was referred to as "James the older" because there was another disciple named "James" who the disciples creatively dubbed "James the younger". I'm just guessing now, but I think one may have been older than the other ;) He was also a "Boanerges" – "Son of thunder" (or rage)! Not much is actually known of this James the brother of John except that he and his brother John had worked together with their father and were also fishing business partners with Peter and Andrew. Oh... and we know how and when he died. The book of Acts records that King Herod Agrippa had him beheaded in Jerusalem in 44 A.D. because "*it pleased the Jews*". So James must have continued to offend the Jews with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He remained faithful to the Risen Jesus and to His mission to the end. I love that! I wish I was EXACTLY like that – faithful, courageous, representing Christ on earth to the end!

Of the other disciples, Thomas is perhaps best known – for questioning Jesus in John’s gospel chapter 14 and asking Him to clarify his statement that He was going away to His Father’s house where He would prepare a place for them and that they would know the way to come to Him. Thomas was mystified and asked “***But we don’t know where you are going.***



How will we know the way to where it is?” Jesus was able to clarify with His famous words of 14:6 - “***I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father UNLESS AND UNTIL they come thru me.***”

Thomas is even better known for His statement as he enters the upper room where the other disciples were sequestered in hiding after the crucifixion. They are excitedly abuzz with the news that they have seen the Lord, risen and alive! And Thomas responds that unless he feels the scars of Christ with his own hand, He will not believe. Jesus then appears and shows Thomas his scars, to which Thomas gives his famous awestruck response - “***My Lord and My God!***”

I'm afraid we don't have time for the other disciples this morning. Again, not much at all is known of these others anyway. Nathaniel is pointed out by Jesus upon their first meeting to be a man with a pure heart. But it is actually startling how common these men were – at least to begin with. They had fears, faults, and false motives, and Jesus took 3 ½ years to form them into individuals of depth, character, and loyalty, and then into a unified team with which He could build his church, a rather loosely organized human organism that would reach the world with the truth of the Gospel and with the power and love of the Holy Spirit! From these 12, and with the others - men and women who truly believed - the world would be changed one person at a time. Jesus sends out the 12 with these great words. “***Freely you have received. Freely give***” Actually those words reverberate through the centuries until today. If we claim that we are His disciples, He is reaching out over the centuries and saying this to you and I.

