

Jesus Chooses the Twelve Disciples

Matthew 10:2-4; 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-19; Luke 6:12-19

We are now moving into a ministry shift of Christ. The first year was centered on the demonstration of who He was – their Messiah. This was done through His preaching and miracles! Up to this point, His ministry was beginning to be marked by opposition from the religious establishment, and in it sees the beginning of Israel's rejection of Christ that will climax at the cross! Now, this next part of the ministry will center on the training of the selected twelve apostles. The masses will continue, and the opposition will grow stronger and become more organized, but we will find Jesus more and more preparing those who will build on His foundation – the twelve disciples!

“These men had much to unlearn and much to learn; but they were privileged to sit at the feet of the greatest teacher of all time.” J.W. Shepard

“(“But when Jesus knew it,” Matthew 12:15) But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, ⁸And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.” Mark 3:7-8

I. Jesus Withdrawing

- “withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea:” – Jesus left the city behind and He and His followers went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Don't miss the phrase, “But when Jesus knew it,” found in Matthew. What did He know? The plots against His life by the Religious Leaders. The time of His death was not yet come. He had much to accomplish before the cross!
- “great multitude” – In spite of troubles with the Religious Leaders, Jesus was very popular with ordinary people. This is the second time we are reading about the extent of His influence. (Matt. 4:25) Galilee – greater area; Judaea and Jerusalem – Jerusalem and the land surrounding; Idumaea – only mentioned here in the New Testament, south of Judea, mostly Jewish, considered part of Judea; beyond Jordan – this would suggest the cities of Decapolis, 10 cities along an active trade route that ran on the east side of the Jordan River, mostly a Gentile population; Tyre and Sidon – Coastal Phoenician cities north of Galilee, almost always mentioned together. When checking a map of Palestine during the life of Christ, one will see that people literally came from every direction.
- “great things” – All peoples around Israel had heard of Jesus and this was based on the “great things he did.” Notice this passage says nothing about Jesus' teaching or the audience's desire to hear Him. The frenzy of Jesus' “fans” was centered on His healings! They wanted to see “great” and have Him do “great” for them!

Don't miss the very dangerous situation that had arisen. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people had come to see Jesus, many of them with crippling afflictions. They were desperate to just touch Him.

“And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng (Gk - crush) him.¹⁰ For he had healed many (“he healed them all; ¹⁶ and charged them that they should not make him known:” Matthew 12:15-16); insomuch that they pressed (Gk - rush and

fall/throw themselves) upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. ¹¹And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. ¹²And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.” Mark 3:9-12

II. Crowds Overwhelming Please realize that even in the 21st century, crowd-crushing and stampeding is a real thing. It doesn't take much to get a large crowd pushing and very difficult to stop the destruction. Since the year 2000, thousands of lives have been lost by rushing crowds. Here we see Jesus take measures to prevent such an event!

- “small ship should wait on him” – A causal reading of this event might cause one to think Jesus was seeking a boat for preaching to the crowd on the shore but this is not so here. This boat was to be on standby to get Him away from a crushing mob.
- “they pressed upon him for to touch him,” –These crowds were not only hindering the desire Christ had to preach, but now they were a peril, endangering Him and His followers. When studying the word “pressed” I found, rushed, pushed, and crowded. The word “plagues” in verse 10 means, “afflictions, painful, agonizing, physical ailments and illnesses.” The desperation of so many caused them to seek just to touch Him!
- “unclean spirits, when they saw him, feel down before him,” – Picture this! The frenzied crowd pushes in closer and closer; desperately sick and weak people seeking to touch Jesus, and then add the noise and confusion of the obviously demon-possessed throwing themselves down before Christ and calling out, “Thou art the Son of God.” The phrase, “when they saw him,” has the idea, “whenever” a demon saw Christ they would fall down and call out! All the Greek verbs in this passage are in a tense that shows a continual action – continually pressing, continually touching, continually calling out, and falling before.....What a chaotic and scary scene!
- “he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.” – Jesus will always tell demons to be quiet. He did not want the impure words of demons to declare who He was, but His teaching and works were enough. They were not falling before Him in repentance but in fear of His wrath. They knew who He was, and His judgment for their rebellion was sure! But, don't miss that the demons were not the only ones told not to “make him known.” Look at Matthew 12:16. Jesus also told those He healed not to tell others. This is not the first or the last time He will tell a healed person to keep quiet. He did not want the added pressures of more crowds, the critical eyes of the Religious Leaders, or those who might want to make Him their political leader. All of these hindered His ministry!
- “he had healed many”/“he healed them all;” – Healing in the Old Testament was extremely rare. The healing ministry of Jesus cannot be understated! God chose to display Jesus' deity by the power of healing, later, raising people from the dead, and casting out demons! These two phrases from Matthew and Mark tell us of the graciousness and compassion of Jesus. Amidst the chaos and confusion, Jesus healed them all. No one sick or handicapped went away unsatisfied, still broken, and without hope! All were healed and in doing so Jesus proved He was their Messiah!

The crowds were not spiritually motivated, yet He received them, healed them, and cast out demons. Matthew will view the withdrawal from the argumentative Religious Leaders and the gracious and compassionate attitude toward the masses as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah in Isaiah 42:1-4.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, ¹⁸ Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench (these two illustrations point to the gentle way Jesus dealt with the bruised and feeble masses), till he send forth judgment unto victory. ²¹ And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.” Matthew 12:17-21

III. Isaiah Prophecy **Geek Fact – This is the longest Old Testament quote in Matthew.**

- Messiah’s Praise – These are God’s thoughts about His coming Messiah to the earth. Notice God calls Him a beloved, chosen servant. The only One who could do the work of God! And then adds how His soul is very pleased with Him! This is actually very similar and reflects the three times God called from heaven during the life of Christ. Baptism of Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Transfiguration – “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Days before Christ’s crucifixion, Jesus prays that He might glorify His Father, and God the Father replies, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” God was pleased with His Son!
- Messiah’s Character – The humble, gentle, compassionate, and merciful ministry of Jesus was in such contrast to what Israel believed their Messiah would look like! Popular thought was a political Messiah – political agendas; military campaigns; great fanfare; not a gentle one that is even for the Gentiles as described by Isaiah. This attitude certainly was not reflected the lives and ministries of the Religious Leaders of Jesus’ day! They were loud - clamoring for position and a following; quarrelsome - debating and arguing to prove superiority in wisdom and knowledge; revengeful - to anyone who might disagree or stand in their way of doing things. Jesus had shown a great difference between Jewish Leaders and where the path of Judaism had fallen. His life was revealing the truth of God’s character to the people!
- Messiah’s Work – Jesus had come to proclaim truth – truth about His Father; truth about the spiritual kingdom God desired; truth about God’s expectations of love and service from the heart of man! All of this was not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles – the whole world! He was not going to be the high-profile conquer the Jews wanted and expected. But instead, the Lamb of God who will give victory over sin! Then the Gentiles will respond in faith and put their hope in Him!

Matthew was seeing this prophecy fulfilled in Christ and reported it to the Jews in His Gospel! When looking at Jesus’ life chronologically, we must go to Mark and Luke next where Jesus will choose His twelve disciples! Then we move back to Matthew 5-7 where Matthew records the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount.

“And it came to pass in those days (shortly after Sabbath controversies of John 5, plucked grain, and withered hand healing), that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples (“whom he would (wanted):” Mark 3:13); and of them he chose (“ordained” Mark 3:14) twelve, whom also he named apostles; (“that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, ¹⁵ And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:” Mark 3:14-15)” Luke 6:12-13

IV. Jesus Choosing

- “he went out into a mountain to pray,” – Jesus will often retreat and pray to His Father before important events in His ministry. Matter-of-fact, Luke will point this out eight times in his gospel. What a wonderful example to us, His followers in the 21st century! How we should bathe all our decisions and important events in prayer! Here, I personally don’t believe Jesus is asking so much for direction and instruction from His Father, but instead praying for those He would call. Just as Christ is interceding for us; that our faith remains strong, for unity among believers, and for our success with the distribution of the Gospel, so Jesus is praying for the success of those He was working with there in Galilee.
- “he chose (“ordained” Mark 3:14) twelve, whom also he named apostles;” – Notice the sequence, Jesus went up into the mountain to pray all night, returned and called His disciples to Him, and then from them call out the twelve. Mark Strauss, in his book Four Portraits, One Jesus, tells that disciples were common in Jesus’ day both in Judaism and the Gentile culture. Students would seek out and follow respected Rabbis or philosophers. But here, after about one year of ministry, Jesus will call out disciples from an unspecified number of those regular followers and commission them as apostles. Jesus didn’t choose them because of their faith! It was very weak and they certainly weren’t a talented, educated group. But they were willing to obey and follow Him! Christ will demand a high level of commitment. leave all – family, responsibilities (both were ranked high in Jewish culture); take up a cross

Let’s define some of these terms:

“disciple” – a listener to a teacher but not necessarily accepting everything, no authority It is important to note, the Gospels will almost always call these twelve “disciples”

“chose” – Jesus did the choosing – they didn’t choose Him John 15:16

“ordained” - appointed

“apostles” – sent one, commissioned with authority to deliver a message, ambassador of a higher official; In the book of Acts, the twelve disciples will be known as apostles.

Why Twelve? This was a discussion I often saw in my studying. We seem to find a hint from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30. Christ will have these twelve men judge the twelve tribes of Israel in the Millennial kingdom! It is definitely possible these twelve disciples would have realized the significance of their number. Remember, the twelve tribes ceased to exist after the Babylonian captivity. We will see the disciples felt the number was so important, that after the ascension of Christ, they came together to elect a former follower of Jesus, Matthias, to replace Judas Iscariot. (Acts 1:22) Please realize, between Jesus’ kingdom preaching and now the choice of the twelve men, the hopes for a new kingdom of Israel would run high. But a physical kingdom was not what Jesus was actually preaching, it was a spiritual kingdom that needed to be established first. But one day Christ will sit on the throne, and with Him these twelve!

- Job Description of the Twelve Apostles
 - 1) “should be with him” – These twelve were to constitute an inner circle of friends and companions to whom Jesus would confide His thoughts, plans, and teachings more fully than to the other followers. They would witness the work and life of Jesus, be taught intimately by

Him, tested, and given work and tasks, all in preparation for their future ministry. Peter spoke of these days in 2 Peter 1:16.

- 2) “send forth to preach” – We will see two specific incidences Jesus will send these disciples to preach. These are important learning days for them! Learning at the feet of Jesus!
- 3) “power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:” – We will read several times of the disciples having the power to heal physically and to cast out demons. Christ gave these few men this power, and this power was their credentials! This they will take into the book of Acts.

In all this, they were witnesses and learners of Christ’s doctrines, manner of life, wonderful character, miracles, crucifixion, and His resurrection! Their faith was built and tested. What a privilege, they were walking with God in the flesh! Why? So one day they could tell others!

V. Lists of the Twelve Disciples (See Page 7) Let’s look at some “geeky” facts about the four lists of the disciples found in the Scriptures.

- Similarities Peter always first; Judas Iscariot always last; Philip always 5th; James, the Son of Alphaeus always 9th; Always the same people but slightly different order.
- Differences Thaddaeus/Lebbaeus/Judas, the brother of James are the same person; Simon is known as Zelotes and Canaanite
- Interesting Facts Order is set in groups of four. These groups are always in the same order. This is probably due to the loose order of station. Judas Iscariot is always tagged as the traitor; There are three sets of brothers – Peter/Andrew; James/John; James the Less/Judas; We know very little about five of the disciples – these lists is really about it!

“And he came down with them, and stood in the plain (level plateau – high spot but level), and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; ¹⁸And they that were vexed (troubled, tormented) with unclean spirits: and they were healed. ¹⁹And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”
Luke 6:17-19

VI. Crowds Continuing

- “he came down with them, and stood in the plain,” – This information is found only in the book of Luke and falls next into the order of the event. Jesus and “the company of his disciples,” that seems the twelve and the other followers of His, came back down the mountain with Christ and joined the great masses still assembled. Please remember, people had to very much, and on purpose want to go and see Jesus!

- “hear” and “healed” and “touch” – Here are three verbs consisting of the desires of the crowd. “hear” – I am happy to see the crowd had come to hear Jesus! This was not recorded earlier in the book of Mark.

“touch” – This is very interesting! This word seems to carry two thoughts. It was a touch to be healed as that of the woman with the issue of blood found later in the life of Jesus. Many were coming to touch and be healed, but also, it was a driving desire to touch Jesus, as one might want to touch a famous, or honored person.

“healed” – There are always those who were desperately seeking Jesus to heal them both from physical issues and demon possession. Don’t miss the emphasis, Jesus healed **them all!**

That should be our desire also, to hear truth be touched and inspired by truth, and through obedience to Christ, be healed by truth! Jesus still heals our souls, our broken lives, our pathways, our relationships, and all parts of our lives, and then He can make us useable as faithful followers of Him!

Believers Application:

Though we are not apostles in the purest sense of the word, yet we are called to follow Christ and be an ambassador of His! Let’s look at some of the similarities and differences between our call and that of the twelve apostles.

A few differences that we as 21st-century believers have from these disciples:

- we will not reign over the twelve tribes of Israel,
- we did not walk with Jesus or witness His resurrection, and
- we were not part of the book of Acts and built the early church of God.

But, there are similarities that are encouraging for us to understand:

- Our call from darkness to light by Christ – Jesus is our Savior as well as those 12 disciples! Just as Jesus called each one of these, “whom he would” (Mark 3:13) He chooses us. John 15:16; I Peter 2:2-5, 9-10; Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:28-29
- Our work to give the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the world and make disciples! Matthew 28:18-20 This is the same work as given to the twelve!
- We are all just ordinary people! These were plain, blue-collar men – 7 fishermen; 1 tax collector; 4 were even anonymous. No politician, scholar, royal, or rich man among them! But this is a principle of God throughout the Scriptures. He uses weak and ordinary, so He gets the glory! (Jer. 9:23-24) Please know, our churches are full of called-out ones with different backgrounds and abilities and for the most part pretty ordinary too! I have been in many churches over the years and have not seen too many people that the world would hold up as standouts! Oh, there are always a few educated, a few natural leaders, that God has seen fit to save and call to His own but for the most part, we are just pretty plain! Warren Wiersbe said this about the twelve disciples, and I believe with a smile, “It is encouraging to see what Jesus was able to do with such a diversified group of unlikely candidates for Christian service. There is still hope for us!” p. 98 What a wonderful thought! Each one of these men was raw; raw talent, raw faith, raw knowledge, and as we said at the beginning, had a lot to learn as well as unlearn! But when we accept Christ, we also have much to learn and unlearn! But what a patient, compassionate, merciful, loving Savior we serve! I Cor. 1:23-31

Matthew

1. Simon, Peter
2. Andrew his brother
3. James, son of Zebedee
4. John his brother
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew the publican
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus
11. Simon the Canaanite
12. Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him

Mark

1. Simon, Peter
2. James, son of Zebedee
3. John, the brother of James
Boanerges, sons of thunder
4. Andrew
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. Thomas
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Thaddaeus
11. Simon the Canaanite
12. Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him

Luke

1. Simon, Peter
2. Andrew his brother
3. James
4. John
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Matthew
8. Thomas
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Simon called Zelotes
11. Judas, brother of James
12. Judas Iscariot which also was the traitor

Acts

1. Peter
2. James
3. John
4. Andrew
5. Philip
6. Thomas
7. Bartholomew
8. Matthew
9. James, son of Alphaeus
10. Simon Zelotes
11. Judas, brother of James