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Choosing the Twelve (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the process of how Jesus chose the twelve disciples, as found in the gospel of Mark. Although there are no indications that Jesus initially intended to select exactly twelve disciples, this number does hold significance in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus wanted to establish a higher quality relationship with a select group of individuals to groom them for leadership. The designation of apostles and their role in preaching was also discussed.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn to Mark chapter 3. We're just going to take a very small portion here. This has to do with the calling of the twelve apostles. I'm not sure calling is the right word because most of these men, maybe all of them, had been called previously to follow Jesus, but this is more the time of their commissioning or their appointing to be something more than just followers of Jesus, but actually the future leaders of the body of Christ, of the kingdom of God, after Jesus' departure.

And so this choice of twelve was a very important turning point in Jesus' ministry. He had been calling disciples after him, of whom most of these no doubt were among them, previous to this, but they had not held any particular status, nor had he explained to them any particular purpose in his having called them until now. But these twelve now are given a special mission and a special recognition in office.

Beginning at verse 13, this is Mark 3 at verse 13, it says, He went up on the mountain and called to him those he himself wanted, and they came to him. Then he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Bonerges, Andrew, excuse me, which is Sons of Thunder, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him, and they went into a house.

Now this account in Mark compresses the story a little more than Luke does. Mark and

Luke are the only gospels that give us any description of Jesus' selection of these twelve men. Neither of them make it very clear exactly what the time frame was.

But there is reason to say it was approximately in the middle of Jesus' public ministry. It divided his public ministry into probably almost equal parts. We can say this based partly on the fact that John, who does not tell us of the selection of the twelve or name them, yet John speaks of the group as an ordered group, as a designated group of the twelve, in chapter 6 of John.

For example, at the end of John chapter 6, it says in verse 66, From that time many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away? So here we have the twelve designated as a particular definable group. And so the calling of the twelve must have occurred before John chapter 6. Although we've already covered John chapter 5, so we're assuming that it happened sometime between John chapters 5 and 6. Now John chapter 6 occurred at a Passover.

We are told that in John 6 verse 4. It says, Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Now Jesus was crucified at another Passover, probably the one after this one. So the twelve were a designated group at least one year before the crucifixion.

Because Jesus died at Passover season, and this was a previous Passover in John chapter 6. And the twelve were already a designated group. Although John doesn't tell us when or give their names, their appointment or anything. But we can see that John gives us a little bit of chronological assistance here.

By pointing out that at this point, John chapter 6, just exactly one year before Jesus' crucifixion, the twelve were already designated. It's Mark and Luke that tell us the specifics of his designating the twelve. Now I'd like to show you what Matthew says about this.

Although Matthew doesn't tell us when the twelve were called, he does give a list of their names. As Mark and Luke also do, but in a very different situation. In Matthew chapter 10, well the very end of chapter 9 should probably be affixed to it.

The verse 38, or verse 37 and 38 of chapter 9 of Matthew. Jesus said to his disciples, now this is before there's any reference to the twelve in Matthew. He said to his disciples, the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. And after he tells them to pray for that, he actually appoints them to go out, at least twelve of them. He says, and when he had called his twelve disciples to him, he gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of diseases.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these, and then it gives them just as Mark

gives them in the passage we read. Now the difference in Matthew is that they are named here in connection with his sending them out. We know that he sent out the twelve on this occasion, and on a later occasion he sent out seventy to do a similar kind of mission.

To various villages that Jesus either would himself later come to, or which he knew he would not have time to go to, and so he was sending them instead. The thing I would point out about Matthew 10, however, is that the twelve seem to have been selected prior to this. It's simply that Matthew now gives their names.

It says he called his twelve disciples to him, suggesting that they were already a recognized group at this point, the twelve. It's simply that Matthew is not previous to this, told us of the selection of the twelve, nor given the names of them. So at this point, when he talks about the sending out of the twelve, he happens to give their names.

But he does not suggest that Jesus on this occasion selected the twelve, but there is certainly the indication that he had done so at some previous time. So the actual occurrence of his selecting the twelve, and their names being given at the time of their selection, is found in Mark and in Luke. Now Luke does give us something chronological, although not enough to really tell us the exact frame of time, but it does give us an important connecting link.

In Luke chapter 6, verses 12 and following. Now it came to pass in those days that he went out into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples to him, and from them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles.

Simon, whom he named Peter, Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, Judas Iscariot, who also became a traitor. Then reading on we see, and he came down with them, and stood on a level place with a crowd of his disciples, and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits, and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for power went out from him and healed them all.

Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor. And I read it this far so that you see that at this point the Sermon on the Mount begins. Some have felt that Luke is not giving for us the same sermon as we find in Matthew, which we usually call the Sermon on the Mount.

There are some differences, but mostly similarities. We will assume for the time being that this is the same sermon, and it is generally understood to be so by scholars. Which means that Luke has placed the selection of the twelve immediately before the Sermon

on the Mount.

Now that doesn't help us necessarily in deciding where it falls in relation to Jesus' geographic movements and his tours of Galilee and so forth, because we don't know exactly where he was when he gave the Sermon on the Mount. But we do see a connection here. Jesus goes up onto a mountain to pray all night.

When morning comes, he calls the persons who are the larger group of disciples that had been following him around, and he selects twelve of them whom it says he calls apostles. He gave them this special name. Luke 6.13 says he named them apostles.

He gives their individual names, and then it says he came down with them partly down from the mountain, and at a level place he sat down and then he gave the Sermon on the Mount. Now Matthew of course gives us the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, but Matthew does not tell us of the selection of the twelve, as I pointed out. It does tell us of the sending out of the twelve at a later date, but Matthew does not record when the twelve were sent out.

But we might assume, if Matthew follows anything like a chronological order, that it should be placed between chapters 4 and 5 of Matthew. Although we have already covered events from much later chapters of Matthew, like Matthew 9 and Matthew 12. But that is simply because Matthew doesn't follow an exact chronological order.

What we can say is that we have altogether four lists of the twelve apostles. They are not exactly like each other, and that makes for an interesting comparison, and I'd like to dwell somewhat in this session on the differences in these lists and what we can deduce from them about these men. But I also want to talk about the actual act of Jesus and his motivations for selecting these twelve.

And for that we have to go to Mark and Luke. Now we just looked at Luke, and we looked at Mark before that. In Luke we are told, what Mark does not tell us, is that before Jesus selected the twelve, he spent the entire night in prayer.

Now, for Jesus, prayer was not an unusual thing. In fact, we are informed in the scriptures that he tended to go out a long time before day, perhaps every day, or at least with some regularity or frequency. And he'd go out and pray by himself in a lonely place.

How often he may have spent an entire night in prayer, we don't know. We have, after he fed the five thousand in John chapter 6, we know that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, after he sent his disciples across the lake, and he was there until about the middle of the night. So he must have spent many hours in prayer, both in the early mornings and in the late nights.

On this particular occasion, he spent the whole night in prayer. Whether he did so on

other occasions or not, we don't know for sure. But the suggestion that he spent the entire night in prayer before making this selection is very important, because it means that Jesus was not going to lay hands suddenly on anyone.

The Apostle Paul, when writing to Timothy about the subject of the appointment of church leaders, indicated that the person who is selected should not be a novice, he said in 1 Timothy chapter 3. A novice would be a fairly new Christian. It says in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 6, when it's giving the qualifications for elders of the church, he says, Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Now, you can see that there is a tendency for some persons to be puffed up with pride when given authority, when given positions of leadership.

We've been told from secular authorities that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. That's an observation of a worldly philosopher, not from the scripture. And of course, Jesus has absolute power and he hasn't been corrupted, but lesser men often are corrupted by power.

And Paul does not advise that anyone who is a fairly young believer be admitted to the role of elder, which is a much less lofty role than apostle, lest that person may get too proud of the authority that he's been given. And that suggests that you'd have to have a level of maturity and a level of immunity to pride in a person that you give an office to. Now, this is very difficult to observe, especially if you've got a movement happening that's growing rapidly.

Just ask the people in YWAM. YWAM starts bases, probably a couple of them a week somewhere in the world, hundreds of them a year. And while there are thousands of people working at YWAM, no matter how big it is, there's always going to be a shortage of people who are mature, stable, immune to pride, and able to lead without abusing power.

And YWAM has some very excellent leaders. Some of the very best leaders in the body of Christ that I've ever met are in YWAM. They also have some very young leaders in some cases because of the proliferation of bases and so forth.

They have sometimes had to place people into leadership trusting that they'll do okay even though they don't have much experience or maybe even a very long walk in the Lord. And many of you are very closely acquainted with YWAM. I don't know if you're as acquainted with it as I am, but many of you, some of you are probably more so than I am.

But you will know that there have been glories and shames associated with YWAM depending on the types of leaders that have been in bases. They've actually had leaders of bases that branched off and commandeered the whole base and kept it for themselves and broke off from YWAM and entered into legal litigations over who owned

the property. This happened a few years ago in New Jersey.

Now, this kind of thing can happen, and this is not to fault YWAM. This is just to say that it's very difficult to choose leaders whom you can be sure won't turn out to be bad eggs. Because for one thing, the people who most want to be leaders are the ones who very probably are the ones to watch out for.

Even the apostles that were chosen did have some wrestlings over these matters. Remember how James and John at one time later wanted to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus. And when the other apostles heard about it, they were angry at them, which suggests that maybe some of them hoped to have those positions and resented James and John trying to muscle their way in ahead of them to those positions.

It's almost certain that even though Jesus made the right choice of leaders, some of them even had to be kept on a short leash and had to be rebuked and confronted about their ambitious expectations about their future. It's really hard to know. Even a person who seems to be a good Christian, and even a mature Christian, can sometimes turn out bad.

Which is no doubt why Jesus had to pray all night before making this election. He had to really find out what God knew about these men. Jesus had a fairly large number of people following him by this time.

We're familiar with the twelve, and we've even read about the call of about seven of them prior to this. But we haven't really, I mean, we have to realize that those guys are mentioned, their call is specifically mentioned prior to this because they later did become apostles and it became important to record their call. But there are many, many other unnamed people, who we'll never know their names until we go to heaven, who were following Jesus probably almost as long as these guys were.

We don't know them because they didn't become apostles later. But there was a large group of people from which Jesus had to select. Men who would be able to be trusted with the leadership of the entire movement after his departure, which was not too far away, a year and a half maybe off.

That's a pretty scary thing. To take guys who've only maybe a year ago not known a thing about the kingdom of God, and to set them loose to run it, you know, within maybe a year or two of the time that they first become acquainted with the concept. And so the selection had to be made.

You know, I really think that the selection of leaders is a very difficult thing. We've had a tremendous turnover in our school here of people in various forms of leadership. And we've never put anyone in any kind of leadership or even any kind of staff position that we didn't at the time think were showing signs of being mature and dedicated Christians.

But a lot of times once people have authority, it doesn't work out as well. That's why Paul said to not be very quick about choosing leaders. In 1 Timothy 5.22, he said to Timothy, Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, meaning don't ordain anyone as an elder too hastily.

1 Timothy 5.22. Now, see, Timothy was an apostolic representative sent from Paul to the church of Ephesus to establish and to appoint elders. And Paul says, Don't do it too hastily. Don't do it prematurely.

Nor share in other people's sins. Keep yourself pure. If you appoint someone to leadership and they turn out to be a bad egg, there's some responsibility you bear.

You become a partaker in their sins because they're operating under your authorization. And so Paul tells Timothy, Don't be too quick about this business of appointing leaders. Now, we might say, Well, Jesus, of course, he knew everything.

He knew about everybody's hearts and therefore he didn't have any problem with that. Well, we pointed out in the past that Jesus, when he came to earth as a man, did surrender some of those divine privileges in order to be like us. And one of those divine privileges would apparently be omniscience, which would explain why he would need to pray to his father all night long in order to get some insight, some guidance in this matter.

And I have no doubt that's what he was praying about. He spent the night in prayer in order to not make the wrong choices. Imagine if he'd selected 12 men who all turned out to be like Judas.

One thing that's amazing is that he did select one who turned out to be Judas, but he later said that this was so that the scripture might be fulfilled. So it was not an accident on his part. It's not as if he made a mistake by picking Judas.

He picked Judas knowing what was going to happen in his case. But what if all of them had turned out that way? Obviously, that would have been a very dangerous condition to leave the church in when Jesus ascended to have men who were unreliable. And yet he'd only known them a very short time at this point.

Yet I think there are people who, because of God's calling and gifting on their life, they are leaders, and they are even already cut from the cloth of leadership even when they're young. And God knows who they are. And you can even bring them under your wing, as it were, when they're fairly immature.

But because God knows that they're called to leadership, it's safe because you don't launch them until they're no longer immature. You launch them once they've grown up a bit. But you select them, it may be, Jesus did at least, before they were mature.

We know that many of the people that Jesus selected on this occasion showed signs of

weak faith or of doubt or of ambition or of other problems. I mean, Peter, who was the chief of them, denied Jesus three times at a point later than this. Thomas wasn't willing to believe in his resurrection until he saw him himself with his own eyes, even though he was told by the other apostles that they had seen him.

And others among them had their problems. I already mentioned James and John and their ambitious interests. Those kinds of things are not really promising attributes in a guy for leadership.

But God knew who would turn out suitable because we find after the day of Pentecost, they all did quite well. And all of them became very excellent leaders of the church. It turned out that he made the right choices.

Although just from his knowledge of them, as a man might know another man, at this point in time, there was hardly anything about them that would make it obvious that they would be better leaders than some of the other choices he could have made. Certainly he couldn't have, with the large number of people around him, he couldn't have spent an equally intense amount of time with all of them so as to know just from his personal acquaintance with them whether they'd turn out well or not. That is why I think he had to pray so long.

And I think there needs to be a lot more prayer than often is in the appointment of leaders to churches and Christian organizations and even just the recognition of people as leaders in your own life. There are people who are, though they may not hold any office in an organization or in a church, they may be to you, a spiritual father, spiritual mother, someone who you look to for spiritual leadership. Be careful that you don't become too dependent upon such people or grant them too much authority in life unless there's been a great deal of prayer gone into it because God knows the hearts and God knows the potentials.

I believe God even knows which ones will defect, as he knew Judas would. And so, if Jesus had to pray all night, I would think that pulpit committees that are choosing pastors for churches and so forth shouldn't do any less praying than that. If Jesus had to pray so much before he could make selections, I would think a lot more prayer than, say, political or economic considerations should be brought to the task of choosing leaders for churches and organizations and so forth.

I don't know that that always happens, that people pray as much as they should in those matters, but they may. Now, it doesn't mention, in this passage in Mark that we started with, it doesn't mention the name apostles given to them. It tells what he selected them for.

In Luke, we saw that it says he called his disciples and of them he chose twelve whom he also called apostles. So, the name apostles is mentioned of this group in Luke, but not

right at this point in Mark. All it tells us in Mark is that he called the ones that he wanted and they came to him and he appointed twelve of them that they might be with him.

I'm looking at Mark 3.14 now. That they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons. Now, I want to say some things about this.

First of all, the number twelve. The number twelve was not an accidental number. It was not accidental on his part that it happened to be the same number as the number of the tribes of Israel.

It was deliberate. We can deduce this from a number of factors. For one thing, from the number of people he had, later he sent seventy out who were worthy of some responsibility.

He could have chosen a larger number than twelve to carry out his responsibilities that he was giving out. And after all, since he wanted to win the whole world, it might seem wise to choose a larger number than twelve. But he restricted it to twelve and took no more.

Furthermore, he could have done it with less than twelve. I mean, when you read the book of Acts, we see that even though there were twelve apostles, most of the major work was done by a few. A handful of guys of Peter's caliber or Paul's caliber, who was not one of the twelve, of course, but was a later apostle, a few guys like that could have done maybe as much as the twelve did as a group.

Most of the twelve we don't hear of at all in the book of Acts except for their names. The list of the twelve is given also in Acts chapter one. That's the fourth list in the Gospels of them, Acts chapter one.

But after giving their names in Acts chapter one, we never read again of any of their activities. It's only Peter and John and then later on James, who was not one of the twelve, and Paul, who was not one of the twelve. All the activity of leadership that was recorded in the book of Acts was by these four men, of which only two of them were of the twelve.

So presumably, with a guy like Peter and John doing the kinds of things Peter and John were doing, he could have gotten by with fewer guys at the top. Just a couple of Peters or a couple of Johns would be enough. But he chose twelve, of which most of them didn't accomplish anything that we know of.

I don't want to suggest that they didn't accomplish anything. There's just nothing recorded that they accomplished. But there certainly is the indication that not all those apostles were equally dynamic or equally effective or equally busy.

They might have all been involved in the ministry, but the book of Acts does not give us any clear indication that the majority of them were even doing anything remarkable. I want to take that back, because it does say in Acts chapter four that signs and wonders were being done by the hands of the apostles, which must mean the whole twelve, the whole body of twelve. And likewise, that the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus was going out from the apostles, which also would have been the twelve.

That was in the Jerusalem church. But as far as the missionary efforts and so forth and the decisions being made at the Jerusalem council, we don't have the impression that Satan and the apostles had an awful lot that they were necessary to be there for. I mean, the things were decided by James and Peter and a few others.

I guess what I'm saying is that the number twelve does not reflect the minimum Jesus could have worked with. He could have worked with fewer if they were of the right stuff, which underscores also something I've said before, and I don't mean to get on a soapbox about it, but it does indicate that Jesus would rather have a few good men than a lot of men who don't have the particular calling to go or the gifting or whatever. Jesus could have picked more than twelve, but he restricted it to twelve, and that was enough.

Those twelve men, or actually just a few of them and a few other guys like Paul, did carry the gospel to the known world in that time. But the reason he chose the twelve and that number and no less and no more is symbolic. We have reason to believe that for more than one factor.

One, of course, is that it does correspond exactly to the number of the tribes of Israel, and the Messiah was expected to restore Israel, but Jesus came to restore a spiritual Israel. We have no reason to believe that these disciples were chosen one from each of the tribes. Now, that would be an interesting thing to try to prove, and it is not impossible.

It is not impossible, in my opinion, that there could have been one apostle from each of the twelve tribes. However, if there were, that would seem to be significant enough to mention the Bible, and the Bible doesn't mention it. I mean, it occurs to me that that would be a very important thing to mention.

You know, Jesus took the pain to choose one man from each of the twelve tribes. We know that Matthew was also named Levi and may well have therefore been of the tribe of Levi, since it was a Levitical name. We know Judas was probably of the tribe of Judah, not only because his name Judas is a Greek form of the name Judah, but also because he was from Keriath.

Judas Iscariot. Iscariot means a man of Keriath. And Keriath was a city in Judah, or Judea at this time.

So he was probably of the tribe of Judah. But, and Simon, Peter, was probably, we don't know this to be true for sure, but he could have been of the tribe of Simeon, since the name Simon is another form of Simeon. But then we got a problem, because there were two Simons among the apostles.

And if they were both, you know, named after their tribe, then that would make two guys from the same tribe, and that would spoil the perfection of twelve men from twelve tribes. In fact, there was a lot of duplication of names. There were two Simons, two Jameses, and two Judases among the apostles.

Out of twelve guys, six of them did not have a unique name, but shared their name with one other person. There's other things to point out about them, but we're not to that point yet. But without any extrapolation that Jesus picked one man from each of the twelve tribes, it can hardly be doubted that the number twelve for the apostles was intended to be something that corresponds to the number of the tribes of Israel.

And something Jesus said on that subject would verify that for us beyond question, I think. In Matthew chapter 19, and parallels, we have the story of the rich young ruler. And after the rich young ruler declined to do what Jesus said, and he refused to sell what he had and follow Jesus, Peter said, in verse 27, Matthew 19, 27, See, we have left all and followed you, therefore what shall we have? So Jesus said to them, Assuredly I say to you that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now, the fact that he says you'll sit on twelve thrones makes it clear he was addressing the twelve. And then he says they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel suggests that the number twelve was just the right number for judging the right number of tribes of Israel. Jesus himself connects the two numbers, or the two twelves, together in his own thinking.

We have also, in the book of Revelation, in the description of the heavenly city, there's a number of twelves in the book of Revelation, but in at least one place, the number twelve of the tribes and the number of the apostles seems to be linked together. It says in Revelation 21, verse 12, Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates and twelve angels at the gates, and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. And then it tells about each three facing each direction.

And then it says in verse 19, And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones, and it gives twelve of those. And it says in verse 21, And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each individual was of one pearl, and the street was of gold and transparent glass.

Actually, the verse I wanted that mentions the twelve apostles of the Lamb, I thought it

would be there, but actually I must have skipped it by accident. If you see it, let me know here. It's verse 14.

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, that's what I was looking for, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. So we have the number twelve figuring significantly in two ways with reference to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. It has twelve gates that correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel, and it has twelve foundations that correspond to the twelve apostles.

Mentioning these two in close proximity like this is obviously a deliberate way of saying that the numbers twelve are for the purpose of symmetry there. And so in Jesus' choice of the twelve, there was an obvious harking back to the number of the tribes of Israel, and the suggestion is there that as Jacob had twelve sons, and Jacob was Israel, remember Jacob's name was changed to Israel, so Jesus had twelve sons, or subordinates in this case, starting the New Israel. They actually became the founders and leaders, the patriarchs as it were, of the New Israel that he was starting, the church, the New Spiritual Israel.

And this is no doubt what was intended by him by selecting the number twelve for the apostolate. Now, what they were selected for is stated in Mark. Although Mark doesn't use the word apostles, the idea of apostleship is found in the fact that he says in verse fourteen, Mark 3, 14, Then he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

Send them out to preach suggests apostleship because the word apostle means one who is sent. The Greek word apostolos means a sent one. And therefore, although Mark doesn't use the word apostles in this place, Luke does in the parallel.

Luke says whom he called apostles, but Mark does mention their apostolic work of being sent out, and that's what an apostle is, one who has been sent out by Christ as an official ambassador. Now, there's four things that it says in Mark that characterize the apostolic privileges and the apostolic distinctives in this particular case. One, in verse fourteen, that they might be with him.

Now, disciples presumably were people who were with Jesus most of the time, and there was a larger number than twelve of that. But Jesus was not, I think probably the number of people that were interested in Jesus and following Jesus around a bit probably was growing to an unwieldy large number. And when you think about the logistics of it, Jesus probably slept under the stars a lot of the time, but sometimes he stayed in people's houses.

Like when he came to Capernaum, he stayed in Peter's house. When he came to Bethany, he stayed in the house of Mary and Martha. And so did his disciples with him.

Well, once you had seventy people following you around, or more maybe in some cases, it's hard to find houses to keep these guys in. It's better for these guys to stay at home more of the time, and if you're going to have a certain number that you take with you all the time, you should have a manageable number. A number that you can, you know, give some personal attention to each one.

And this is the important thing about the choice of the twelve, that Jesus wanted to establish higher quality relationships with a few guys whom he was going to groom for leadership. This is not to say that the persons who were not chosen to be apostles were somehow excluded from fellowship with Jesus. Of course, when Jesus was on earth in the flesh, it was not possible for everyone to be with him because he was only in one place at a time.

That's one of the wonderful things that's occurred since the day of Pentecost, that Jesus can be with us all in the form of his spirit being in us and with us. And therefore, we don't have to go to any particular geographical place to be near him anymore. But in those days, to be near Jesus meant you had to go wherever he happened to be.

If you had a family, you had to leave your family. And presumably, you'd have to wonder how they were going to be supported while you were traveling around listening to Jesus preach. You might have bills, you might have a mortgage to pay off, and you might have, you know, other obligations, and you'd have to leave those behind.

Well, that wasn't really what Jesus had in mind for everyone to do. And while he was on earth, it wasn't practical for everybody to be with him all the time. But if he was going to train some leaders, he was going to have to have some people who would leave such things behind and spend time with him, all their time with him.

Probably before this time, even these 12 were only with him on occasion. It's not likely that all the 70 that he later sent out just traveled with him all the time, every moment. I mean, we just don't know how they would have supported their families or how they would have met their regular obligations in living.

Jesus wasn't handing out paychecks to people who were following him at this point. And there were a few women who were supporting Jesus and his disciples at a later time, but that they would be supporting 70 or more people seems highly unlikely. It's probable that until the choice of the 12, people who followed Jesus did so on an occasional basis.

When they could get some time off work, you know, when he was in the area, wherever they lived or whatever, they'd hang out with him as much as they could. But many of them simply couldn't and were not called to leave their jobs and leave their families behind in order to just listen to Jesus talk. But some were.

If they were ever going to be leaders in the church, if they were going to have the mind

of Christ and the heart of Christ and the values and the vision of Jesus, they were going to have to spend some quality time with him, some unbroken time with him. They had to be immersed in his presence, in his supervision, in his teaching. And they had to really become closely acquainted with him and him with them.

And so he chose that there would be a smaller number, 12, who were permitted to be in this relationship with him, which most others were not. The idea of Jesus being infinitely accessible to every man is sort of a sentimental notion that a lot of people have when they think of Jesus. I know they have it because I've been told this many times.

Forgive me if I've told you this before, but this is a good time to bring it up in case I haven't, or even to remind you if I have. There have been many years when people who were friends of mine from years past came to our school. And they came partly because they had known me before I started the school and they'd always thought it would be kind of neat to be disciplined personally by me or something, or just to kind of be away from their obligations that they had at home and come to a school and spend a lot of time with me.

I'm not sure why that would be so desirable. But the point is that unfortunately there have been a number of people who had that as their dream when they came to the school. Usually they were people who knew me before.

And their reason for coming to school was that they expected a lot of intensive hands-on personal time with me, a lot of personal instruction from me, and so forth. And as much as I would like to give that to everyone, that simply isn't something that people, as you know, people who come to school just don't get an awful lot of that from me. I've got a lot of things I'm involved in and I don't get extremely close, usually, with very many first-year students.

When people become second-year students, it's a little different. But, you know, there's just not that much time for it. But a lot of times people, when they would complain about this, and there were some who did, because they didn't get what they thought they were going to get when they came, they would complain that, you know, Jesus wasn't that way.

Jesus was available to everyone. Jesus was always available. There weren't times when you couldn't find Jesus or couldn't spend time with Jesus.

I've heard that more times than I can remember. I'm not sure where they got that information. It wasn't from the Gospels I read.

Jesus spent a great amount of his time trying to avoid the crowds, trying to cross rivers to get away from them, crossing lakes to get away from them, going off into desert places to get away from them, trying to not be so accessible. When they found him, he,

you know, he was moved with compassion and ministered to them. But he spent a lot of time trying not to be so accessible.

In fact, the choice of the twelve was just this kind of a choice, that he wanted to be with some guys, but he didn't want to be with everybody, not in the same amount. And the people who did get to Jesus often were those who forcibly pushed their way through the crowd and to touch the hem of his garment or something like that. But they didn't exactly find it real easy to get a private meeting with him.

Nicodemus and the woman at the well were fortunate they caught him before he got popular. And they got some private conversations with him. But his selection of the twelve was that someone would find him accessible, that someone would be able to get intensive training from him.

And twelve was a number that he could manage. As a man with human limitations on his time and space and so forth, he could only manage a certain number and twelve was within that number. If Jacob could raise twelve sons, Jesus, who didn't even have other family obligations to worry about, could raise twelve leaders, twelve men under him.

And that's exactly what he wanted. He chose these men so that they might be with him. And this is in contrast with others who simply weren't going to be able to be with him as much.

Now I want to point this out that even the twelve weren't all with him quite to the same extent. Although they, with reference to all other people who wanted to be with Jesus, the apostles were the most privileged in terms of being able to spend their time with Jesus. There were some among them that were selected even to be with him when others were not.

We know, of course, that Peter and James and John, whom we sometimes refer to as the inner circle, were allowed to be with Jesus on occasions when the other nine were not. And it's not as if Jesus just randomly grabbed a few guys when he couldn't take them all into the house. It was always the same three.

When Jesus went up on the Mount of Transfiguration, he took those three with him, none of the others. When Jesus went into the house of Jairus to raise his daughter from the dead, he left nine of his disciples outside, but it was those three, those same three, who were taken into the room to be with him while he did this. Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he took those three into the garden with him and left the others outside of the gate.

Which gives us a very clear impression that these three guys, Peter, James, and John, had a closer relationship with Jesus than some of the others did, even of the other apostles. And, interestingly, the same three appeared to be the main leaders in the book

of Acts, until James, that James, was killed. He was the first apostle they martyred in Acts chapter 12, but after that, another James became prominent, the brother of the Lord became prominent in the church in Jerusalem.

But Peter and John, who were of the original inner circle of Peter, James, and John, remained some of the more important guys. In fact, how many of the other apostles even wrote books of the Bible? Matthew did, but Peter and John basically are the apostles who wrote books of the Bible out of the twelve, with the exception of Matthew. So we can see that Jesus, even among the apostles, had his, I guess we could say, I don't know if favorites is the right word, but ones that he favored them with more training, with more exposure.

On one occasion, Andrew was admitted into that circle because the Olivet Discourse, according to Mark 13, was spoken privately to Peter and James and John and Andrew. But Andrew wasn't even allowed to be with the three on some other occasions. Those three definitely had an inside line.

And then, of course, of those three, there is one who is said to have stood out as the beloved disciple, and the one who clearly outlived all the others when the others were dead. And there were even rumors about him that he was not going to die before Jesus came back, although he himself denied that such a rumor was true. It's clear that even among the inner circle, there was one who was more close to Jesus, it would appear, and that was John.

Now, what I'm saying is that Jesus, like any other leader, had to distribute his time among a small number of people. And even the small number that he spent most of his time with had smaller numbers within it that he spent more of his time with. And that is the way that people have to manage their time.

I would not doubt that some of the people who were not chosen to be of the twelve were a little bit upset that they weren't chosen because they could have argued, well, I was with him as long as Peter was. And by the way, there were others who were with him that long. There were others, apparently a number of others, who were with him as long as any of these guys were.

Because remember, in Acts chapter 1, after Judas had hanged himself and Peter decided that someone should replace Judas to bring the number back up to twelve, which he felt was an important number for it to be, he said, now we have to choose somebody who has been with us from the beginning, from the preaching of John until the time when Jesus was taken up. In other words, someone who had been around and hanging around with them as much as they had. Someone who had been with Jesus as long as they had and had been as close to him as they were.

And they found a couple of guys to vote between or to cast lots between and Matthias

was chosen. But Jesus didn't choose Matthias, but he must have been there. And there were others who were there.

And one could wonder, did these people who felt like they had every bit as much qualification to be chosen because they had been around as long as Peter and James and John had, did they resent the fact that they weren't chosen? No doubt some of them did. I don't know. I mean, they were mere humans.

We know that even the twelve resented James and John at one point. So, I mean, there were human emotions and jealousies and so forth in this group, but Jesus still made his choices. Now, I want to make another observation.

It says he chose them that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. This suggests that he didn't send everybody out to preach, at least not as a vocation. Now, he later, in Luke chapter 10, he did send out the 70 to preach in groups of twos, so it's quite clear that the apostles were not the only ones who had the privilege of preaching because there were the 70 that he sent out in Luke chapter 10.

And then in the book of Acts, of course, there were a number of others who preached besides the apostles. However, it was principally the apostles who were the preachers in the early church. I don't believe this is news to you because I think I pointed out on other occasions.

But it says this in Acts chapter 2, or actually Acts chapter 4, I think is where it makes this point. Near the end, it says in verse 33, And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Now, this is when there were about 5,000 people in the church.

But the church was the multitude in verse 32. Acts 4, 32 says, Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. Neither did anyone say that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

So there was a community life among the saints, but the witness was given by the apostles, the public witness. They were the ones that were sent by Jesus to preach. Now, again, I want to make it clear, Stephen preached, and Philip preached, but not as apostles.

And they were never, to our knowledge, sent out to preach. Jesus sent the twelve to preach. Stephen and Philip went preaching.

I mean, Stephen did it in Jerusalem, and Philip later did it after he was scattered by persecution up into Samaria and in Caesarea. But, for the most part, Jesus intended that the preaching would be done by qualified men that he had selected for the task. And I say that partly to balance, too, some notions that we could...