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Matthew 10:1 - 10:4



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg delves into the list of the twelve apostles as mentioned in Matthew 10:1-4 and Luke 6:12-16. He notes that while there are some name discrepancies, the first four apostles, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, are the most well-known. The speaker also explains the political and religious backgrounds of some of the lesser-known apostles, such as Judas of Galilee and Judas Iscariot. Overall, this discussion provides valuable insights into the historical and cultural context surrounding the twelve apostles.

Transcript

Today we'll turn to the tenth chapter of Matthew, and there we will find a list of the twelve apostles. There are some points of interest about this list, and so we'll take this session to talk about the twelve apostles, who they were, and what we are told about them in the scriptures. In Matthew 10, verses 1-4, we read, 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 disease.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. First, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother. James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

Philip and Bartholomew. Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector. James, the son of Alphaeus and Lebeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus.

Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. All right, now this list of the twelve, we will look at, because it differs in at least the chosen designations for some of the members of the list, as you look at different gospels, and even the book of Acts, where we find a list of the twelve apostles in these places. But I'd like to begin by pointing out that it says, When Jesus had called his twelve disciples, and then it says in verse 2, Now the names of the twelve apostles are these.

One can see quite clearly that in this context, Matthew is using the word disciples and apostles as synonyms, synonymously. But we need to make it very clear that Jesus had many more disciples than he had apostles. The apostles were chosen, twelve chosen

men, chosen from among the larger category called disciples.

And although Matthew, in this particular case, uses the terms interchangeably when speaking of the twelve, we need to be aware of the notion that Jesus only had twelve disciples. That simply is not true. In Luke chapter 6, verse 12, it says, Now it came to pass in those days that he went out to 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. And then it gives their names here too. This is Luke 6, verses 12 and 13.

Notice, he called his disciples to him, and from them he chose twelve, whom he called apostles as well. So the apostles were called disciples and apostles, but they were chosen from a much larger group of people that were disciples and who were not themselves apostles. The word apostle means a sent one, one who is sent, from the Greek word apostolos.

And we read in Matthew chapter 10 of Jesus actually sending them out for the first time. He chooses, he calls the twelve to him, and he gives them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of diseases and all kinds of disease. Now he actually gives us directions to them later on in verse 5, but before that happens, we read of their names.

Now there are four lists of the twelve apostles in the scriptures. There is one here in Matthew. There is one also in Mark chapter 3, verses 16 through 18.

There is one in Luke, which I just read from, Luke 6, verses 14 through 16, gives a list of the twelve. So we've got one in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Now John does not ever give us a list of the twelve, but the book of Acts gives us the fourth list, and of course Acts was written by the same man who wrote Luke.

Luke wrote Luke, and actually he made a list of the apostles in both books. Now in Luke chapter 6, Luke just tells us their names at the time that they were chosen to be apostles. In the book of Acts, chapter 1, in verse 13, Luke gives their names again, but this time he's describing who was in the upper room awaiting the day of Pentecost after Jesus' ascension.

And he gives the names. Now he only gives the names of eleven, however, and the reason is because by this time Judas was dead and had not yet been replaced. So in Acts 1.13 we have the list of eleven, but they are, of course, the same list as was given in Luke 6, but less Judas Iscariot.

Now there are a number of things to observe when you compare the various lists. First of all, they do not agree with each other completely in terms of the names that are given.

All four lists in the first four positions include Peter and his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

These four men are always mentioned first, although in some cases they are given in different order. Matthew has Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Mark has Peter, James, John, and Andrew.

Luke follows the same pattern as Matthew and has Peter, Andrew, James, and John in both places that he gives the list. So these four men obviously always belonged at the beginning of the listing. Now three of those four, Peter, James, and John, we sometimes call them the inner circle of Jesus' apostles because they were granted certain intimacy and certain closeness and certain experience that the others were not taken in on.

For example, we saw when Jesus went into Jairus' house because his daughter had died, and Jesus put everybody out of the room before he raised the girl from the dead except for the parents, and Peter, James, and John, those three apostles were with him. The other apostles were left outside. On another occasion, when Jesus went up on a mountain and encountered Moses and Elijah, what we call the Mount of Transfiguration, he took again these three men, Peter, James, and John, and not the others with him.

And then finally at the end of Jesus' earthly career, when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying before his arrest, he took Peter, James, and John, the same three men, into the Garden with him and left the other nine further out. So it seems clear these three men had certain opportunities of being trained and observing Jesus, doing things, and so forth, that the others did not have, and therefore they're sometimes called the inner circle. Now Andrew is also in the four, and Andrew is not usually included in the inner circle.

We should probably call it inner triangle since there's three men in it. But Andrew was Peter's brother, and Andrew, in fact, knew Jesus before Peter did. He introduced Peter to Jesus, according to the story in John chapter 1. But Andrew, for some reason, was not included in this inner circle.

There is one occasion only of which we read where Peter, James, and John, and Andrew had a private talk with Jesus, and that is in Mark chapter 13, where Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple, and these four men came to him and said, When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign that these things are about to happen? And Jesus followed that with what we usually call the all of it discourse, that discourse about wars and rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines in diverse places and the abomination of desolation and all that. That discourse, which is found in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21 and in Mark 13, that discourse was given only in the hearing of four men, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the same first four men listed here. So three of these four were especially privileged, and all four were involved in having the all of it discourse addressed to them privately.

And then there were the other eight guys who were called apostles, and all of the accounts, all of the lists, all four of them, put Philip in the fifth position. And then, although the order is not always the same, there is Matthew, the tax collector, and Thomas, who sadly has come down through history remembered as Doubting Thomas, and Bartholomew. Okay, so you've got Philip and Matthew and Thomas and Bartholomew.

Now, something probably should be said about Bartholomew, because we know almost nothing about him. That is, by that name. We never read of Jesus calling someone named Bartholomew in any other passage.

On the other hand, we do read in John chapter 1 that along with Philip, Jesus called a man named Nathaniel to follow him. Nathaniel was a friend of Philip's, and when Philip was called, he went and got his friend Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus too. And it would appear that Nathaniel became one of the crowd too, and became, it would seem, one of the apostles.

He is mentioned elsewhere in the Gospel of John also. But outside of the Gospel of John, we never read the name Nathaniel. And yet, what we do read of him in the Gospel of John certainly gives us the impression that he was one of the apostles.

Now, how do we deal with that? Well, most scholars seem to think, and I would agree with them, that Nathaniel and Bartholomew are the same person. That he is simply called Bartholomew in the other Gospels, and Nathaniel in the Gospel of John. This should not be too strange, because we know that Matthew, indisputably, is known by more than one name.

Matthew is also known as Levi, and Peter was also known as Simon. And a lot of these guys had more than one name by which they were known. The name Bartholomew in the Hebrew simply means son of Ptolemy, or son of Ptolemy.

And it's very possible that Nathaniel's father's name was Ptolemy, or Ptolemy. And therefore, he was called son of Ptolemy, Bartholomew. That's what it means.

Jesus called Peter Simon Bar-Jonah, and Bar-Jonah means son of Jonah. So, he could call him Bar-Jonah, just like we might call someone whose name was Johnson. We might call him Johnson.

We might call him Bill, if that's his first name, and call him Johnson if that's his last name. We can call him by either name. And especially if he was called Johnson because his father's name was John, that would certainly be another way to refer to him as the one who is the son of John, Johnson.

Now, Bartholomew means son of Ptolemy, and is probably the same man whose first name was Nathaniel. And most, I think, New Testament students and scholars would

agree with that. Now, as I said, Matthew was a tax collector.

We've already studied earlier in the text, in chapter 9 of Matthew, about his call. And he was also known as Levi. Philip, we don't know too much about, except that Jesus encountered him in John chapter 1, and invited him to follow him.

And Philip went and got his friend Nathaniel and brought him too, and so they came there together. Now, after those four, we have another four. See, these lists of the apostles seem to divide into three groups of four in each case, because you've always got Peter, Andrew, James, and John in the first four positions, although you will find that their names are in different orders sometimes.

Those four are always in the first four positions. Then you always have Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew in the next four positions, though within those four positions their position sometimes changes. But Philip is at the head of that.

And then the next four are always the same guys, but sometimes in different order also. They are lesser known. You know, it's interesting, because the first four, Peter, James, John, Andrew, are the best known.

They are the ones that we know the most about from the Gospel stories. The next four, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas, are sort of not as well known, but still we know some things about them. There are stories about them in the Gospels.

But the last group, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, are relatively unknown. We know almost nothing about them. James of Alphaeus, Lebeus, who is also named Thaddeus, according to Matthew, and Simon the Canaanite, or Canaanian in the Greek, and Judas Iscariot.

Well, we all know who Judas Iscariot was. He's the guy who betrayed Jesus. But who are these others? James of Alphaeus.

Well, not much is known about him. His name is in all the lists. And it either means he was James the son of Alphaeus or James the brother of Alphaeus.

It's not entirely clear. The next guy is rather interesting because he is known by three different names. Lebeus is given by Matthew, and Thaddeus is given by Matthew also.

In Mark, he's simply called Thaddeus. But in Luke, this same fellow seems to be called Judas of James. Now, Judas of James can mean Judas the son of James or Judas the brother of James.

Since there is another James in this list, James of Alphaeus, this Judas might have been his brother. And he was known by three names. He was known as Judas.

He was also known and distinguished from Judas Iscariot because Judas Iscariot was a

different man. But this Judas of James was also known as Thaddeus and as Lebeus. So we've got a man who had three different names.

Then, of course, we have Judas Iscariot is in all the lists except for the one in the book of Acts because he was dead by that time. So, some interesting things here. One thing is that of the twelve apostles, there seemed to be six of them who were brothers to some others in the group.

For example, Peter and Andrew were brothers. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were brothers. And it would appear that James of Alphaeus and Judas of James, they may have been brothers as well.

So, of the twelve men, fully half of them were siblings of someone else in the group. The other six guys, I don't know what their relationships were because we know too little about them. But another thing to point out is that some of them were relatives of Jesus.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were the sons of Salome. Salome was the wife of Zebedee. And according to the scripture, she was the sister of Jesus' mother.

We're told that in the 19th chapter of John, that Salome was Jesus' mother's sister. So that these men were first cousins of Jesus. James and John were first cousins of Jesus.

We don't know if any of the others were related to Jesus. They may have been, but we don't know. But it's kind of interesting also that there were so many duplications of certain names.

For example, there were two Simons. There was Simon, who was known as Peter. And then there was Simon, who is here called the Canaanite.

Although when Luke mentions him, he calls him Simon Zelotes or Simon the Zealot. We'll talk about that in a moment. But there's two Simons in the group.

There's two Jameses in the group. There's James, the son of Zebedee, and James of Alphaeus, whoever he may have been. And then there's two Judases in the group.

There's Judas Iscariot and Judas of James, who's also known as Thaddeus and Lebius. So in a group of 12 men, you've got six of them that share a name with someone else in the group. Two Simons, two Jameses, and two Judases.

And you've got six of them, overlapping somewhat the six in the other category, who are brothers of someone else in the group. So those things are rather peculiar. I cannot say they are significant, because I don't know that they are.

But it's just a peculiarity of a group of men so small, only 12, that there'd be so much shared things among them, names and relationship. Now, I did mention Simon the Canaanite, as some translations say, who is also called by Luke Simon Zelotes. Zelotes

means the zealot.

And the zealots were actually a political party in Israel. They were the most radical political party. They were the resistance movement against the Romans.

The Romans were the occupying army who had conquered and occupied Israel. And the zealot movement were followers of a man named Judas of Galilee, not one of the apostles, another Judas, who had taught that it is unlawful for Jewish people to pay tribute to a Gentile overlord, because he said, God is our king. And if we pay tribute to Caesar, then we are denying that God is our king, and we are acknowledging Caesar as our king.

So this was really a tax resistance movement. And it got beyond tax resistance. It got to the point of armed attacks on the Romans.

It'd be possibly comparable to, maybe in America, the militia movement in some respects. I don't mean to say that the militia movement has done anything really violent against law enforcement. Maybe they have, maybe they haven't.

I'm not that aware of their activities. I'm simply saying that they are a group of people who are standing against the status quo and are armed and prepared to do something about it. And that is sort of what the zealots were like.

Now, Jesus did not necessarily exhibit any zealot tendencies himself. In fact, he was once asked by the Pharisees, is it lawful to pay taxes or tribute to Caesar or not? Now, the zealots said, no, it's not. But Jesus said, render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is his.

And in so saying, Jesus seemed to approve of paying tribute to Caesar, and therefore he did not agree with the zealots on this matter. Now, one of the disciples of Jesus had been a zealot, Simon the Zealot. And he apparently had been part of this rabble-rousing radical denomination or political party in Israel, but he had changed.

He had followed Jesus instead. He had come around and joined Jesus' movement. Now, why he did so, we don't know.

I mean, it may have been a true recognition that his former zealot tendencies were not correct and that he needed to change his ways, or he might have initially thought that Jesus was going to be the leader who would drive out the Romans. I have reason to believe that some of the apostles anticipated that being the case, and so he may, as a zealot eager to see the Romans driven out, he might have felt like, here's the leader I can rally behind who will get the job done. If so, then he had to have some changes of his mind, because Jesus did not come to drive the Romans out, though many of the Jews hoped he would.

So these are the twelve men. The first four are the best known, Peter, James, John, and Andrew. The second group of four are the next best known.

They're not as well known as the first four, but there are things we do know about them. That's Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas. And then the last four are the most obscure at all, except for Judas Iscariot, who is not obscure only because he is notorious.

And that's James of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, also known as Lebius and Judas of James, Simon, the zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Of them, of the twelve, it would appear that Judas Iscariot was the only one who was not a Galilean. There is reason to believe that all of Jesus' apostles were from Galilee, except Judas Iscariot.

We know that he was not, because the word Iscariot is not a name. It means, of Kerieth. That is, he was from the city of Kerieth.

Judas of Kerieth is what Iscariot means. And Kerieth was a city of Judah. So, we know that Judas came from a city of Judah.

And we would have guessed that anyway, perhaps, because his name, Judas, is simply the Greek form of the name Judah. And many people, of course, of the Jewish people, would name their children after their tribal ancestor. And he was of the tribe of Judah, so he was called Judas, after their ancestor Judah.

And so, we have one disciple who is a Judean, from Judah, or Judea. The others, apparently, were all Galileans, it would appear. Remember on the day of Pentecost, when these other eleven were all speaking in tongues, and the people standing by said, aren't these men all Galileans? And yet, why do we all hear them speaking in our languages? So, Jesus seemed to pick eleven locals, and one out-of-towner.

And that out-of-towner was the one who betrayed him later on. Now, I would point out that he picked these men for a special purpose. He wasn't rejecting the other disciples from being disciples.

He picked these men for a mission. He picked these men to be the leaders of his movement after he would leave. And that's what they became in the book of Acts.

They were the leaders. They're the ones who wrote Scripture and so forth. Now, Jesus knew he was going to leave, but they didn't.

They thought they were going to be his lieutenants under him, as he would set up his kingdom on earth. But he had in mind to train them to take over his position, as it were, once he was gone physically from the earth, and that they would be his spokesmen and his representatives. Hence, the word apostles, which means one who is officially sent as a representative of the one who is sending him.

And that is what they are. That is what they were and what they will always be. They are the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

In the book of Revelation, we read that the foundations of the city of God are twelve stones, gemstones. And on the name of each stone is the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. So, these men have a high rank forever in the kingdom of God, although their rank is different than what they initially perceived it to be, because they thought they were joining a political movement, it seems, political and religious.

But they obviously became, strictly speaking, spiritual leaders with no political activity at all. We'll have to talk more about them and the life of Christ next time, I see from the clock we've run out of time for this session. Please join us next time.