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Choosing the Twelve (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this piece, Steve Gregg discusses the importance of carefully choosing spiritual leaders and evangelists. He emphasizes that not everyone is suited for leadership roles and stresses the significance of discipleship and maturity before ordaining anyone. Gregg also touches on the selection of the apostles by Jesus, highlighting the unique qualities and roles each one possessed.

Transcript

...everybody should be an evangelist, or that everybody should be a missionary. No doubt there are many people who need to be missionaries who are not yet, and who have a call that they are perhaps needing to be more open to than they are. But it should not be said by some kind of a pendulum swing of extremism that everybody should consider himself to be a missionary candidate, or everybody should consider himself to be called to evangelism in the direct sense of going out and preaching in a public way, because that is not what we see happening in the Book of Acts, and it doesn't appear to be agreeable with what Jesus chose these twelve for.

He chose these twelve so that he could send them out to preach. But there were other disciples who on one occasion he sent out to preach, but that wasn't their vocation. They were to be a witness, no doubt, like the man of the tombs, who was not permitted to follow Jesus, though he wanted to.

Jesus just said, go back and tell your friends the great things God's done for you. That's not to suggest that the man of the tombs became a straight preacher, but simply that he bore witness, his life was a witness. The wonderful works of God in his life were manifest to all, and he was supposed to let them know that Jesus had done it.

And every Christian is a witness in that sense. But to try to press everybody into one mold, where they should all be missionaries, or all should be street preachers, or all should be public evangelists, in some sense, is to imbalance the body of Christ, in my opinion. And Jesus chose a small number to train for preaching, and to commission for preaching.

My own background is such that I always thought that everyone should be a preacher. Probably that's partly due to the fact that I was a preacher, and I think I am called to preach, but a lot of times, especially when you're young, and you're called to do something, it's easy to think everyone should do it too. I mean, if you're doing it, everyone should do it.

And it was easy for me to be sucked into this mentality, it happened to be in the movement I was in, that everyone was pressed upon to be evangelistic. And I personally believed that everyone should be. And I read a book by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones several years ago.

It's been over ten years ago now. I think it's called *Preaching and Preachers*. But if you're not familiar with him, he was a wonderful pastor, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones.

He was a medical doctor who became a pastor, and wrote many books that are very highly esteemed, sort of like Spurgeon. He's almost as highly esteemed as Spurgeon, I suppose, maybe above Spurgeon in some people's minds. But he was writing about preachers and preaching, and something he said was very foreign to me.

I thought he couldn't be serious. But he was... I forget what denomination he was. He may have been a Baptist or something.

But he felt like the movement toward every man being a preacher, toward lay preaching and things, was not a good one for the church. That was so foreign to my way of thinking. I thought everyone should be a preacher.

And what he argued was something... Looking back, and the way I see things now a little bit, it makes good sense to me now. But he felt like the quality of preaching, and the quality of the witness of the church, has been deteriorated by people who don't know really what they're talking about. People whose lives do not exemplify the gospel, because they're immature, they're maybe new Christians, or maybe they're off-balance people, going out there and becoming public preachers.

And not having their doctrines settled, not having even a clear picture of what the true gospel is, in many cases just having zeal, but not according to knowledge, that a lot of times the message and the image of the Christian church and of the gospel have been compromised by the zeal of persons who are not really called by God to preach, or if they are, they're not mature enough to be released for it. They're novices. And that it has not been a blessing to the church to have this mass street preaching kind of a thrust.

Well, that was news to me at the time, and I thought I couldn't agree with him at the time, because it just went so much against my grain. But as I look back now, my own studies of the Bible have changed my views a bit, and it's much more to be along those lines. Although, I would not agree with him.

I think his opinion was that preachers shouldn't be out there preaching unless they've been through a seminary or something like that, and I don't agree with that. I think that God calls preachers, and he may or may not train them through a seminary. I don't think it takes a seminary to make him a preacher.

You is or you ain't. That's all there is to it. You don't study to be a preacher.

You study to be a better preacher. If you're called to preach, studying can help you be a better preacher, but I think that it's the call of God, and many times man can put pressure on others to move into a position of preaching or leadership in the church, which does not represent a call from God. In fact, I remember this issue coming up in a church I was involved in not very many years ago, where they had leadership training classes, and they were really pressing upon almost everybody to become a leader, because the church wanted to have a lot of small groups, and they needed a lot of leaders for that, and they were basically trying to take people who were not leaders and train them to be leaders.

And I had some questions in my mind. I still do. I can't say that I'm certain about this, but I feel fairly strongly about this, that I don't know that you train people to be leaders.

I'm not sure that leadership training is really agreeable with the whole way that God has set up the kingdom of God. It seems to me some people are called to be leaders, and they haven't. Now, they may need to be disciplined in the sense that they need to be not loose cannons shooting off their mouth irresponsibly, and even a person who's got a call to preach can easily do a lot of immature and foolish things.

And a person who may have that call, at times, may need to be disciplined in terms of his discretion and his doctrine and things like that. But I'm not sure you can take someone who isn't called to be a leader and make them a leader. You can teach them time management and the same kinds of things that corporate CEOs are taught to do, but I don't think that makes a person a spiritual leader.

I think the call of God does. And if a person's got it, there may be certainly some training that would benefit them to mature them. But to take someone who doesn't have a leadership call and just teach them certain things that leaders are supposed to do, I don't think that makes a leader out of them, in my opinion.

I think it should be apparent. If somebody is not already showing signs of being a leader, then I don't think someone should try to canonize them as a leader or ordain them as a leader. Many lay people, and by lay people I just mean people who don't hold an office in the church, show tremendous signs of leadership.

And those are the people that I think need to be, in a sense, developed or released to lead. A lot of those people show themselves by their leadership of their homes. When

Paul told Timothy to select leaders for the church, he said, look at their home life.

Are their children in order? Are their wives in submission? Are they managing their household the way that you would want the church to be managed? Because the household is very often the place, it's the training ground, or maybe the proving ground, I should say. Maybe a training ground and a proving ground for leadership. A person who doesn't have his kids in order, a person who doesn't have his wife in subjection, he may be a nice guy, might have his doctrine right or whatever, but he apparently isn't an effective leader and doesn't give signs of being qualified for spiritual leadership.

Now, maybe sometime later that call will become manifest in him. But I would say you look for the people who are already, first of all, motivated. Not motivated in the sense that they want to be elders or that they want to do highly visible leadership things, like they want to mobilize the church and visibly be the leader of some project the church is doing, but people who just tend to have the qualities that leaders should have, which would include humility and modesty and not much concern about being a leader, for one thing.

People who are leaders without trying to be leaders. People who are almost leaders in spite of themselves, because they don't particularly covet a role of leadership, but people look to them anyway because their character exhibits leadership quality. Those are some of the answers I would give.

How should the church select leaders? I really think that every church of any considerable size has a sufficient number of people who probably are called eventually to lead. But I don't know that that comes out by leadership training classes. There might be classes of sorts for people who are recognized to have a germinal leadership gift, but they're just young and need to be disciplined.

But that's a little different concept. How should the church deal with someone who thinks they're called to be a leader, but the church doesn't think they are? That's a very difficult thing. However, I would say this.

Anybody who insists that they are a leader, although no one else is acknowledging them to be, they may have some future in leadership, but they're not ready for leadership. Anyone who's trying to push himself to the front as a leader, even though those who are above him in the church don't recognize him as ready or qualified or whatever, that person has an ambitious problem, a problem of ambition, in my opinion. Anyone who's spiritual will be meek.

And anybody who's meek doesn't push for recognition for himself, doesn't push for position for himself, or power for himself. The people who are pushing in that way are scary. This is something that is so obvious to me, and I'm sure to many others, in the whole issue of women in leadership of the church.

Most women, I know, don't want to be leaders in the church. But when you find a woman who's just not content until she's blasted away all the barriers to her being an elder in the church or a pastor or whatever, I'm concerned about that woman. Not only because it goes against my own personal interpretation of what Paul says about women in leadership, but for a more fundamental reason.

And that is, that person's attitude toward leadership scares me, it would scare me and a man. If a man is ambitious for leadership and says, I'm not going to let anything stop me, I'm going to take leadership, that person is not like the leaders that God chooses. Moses didn't want to be a leader.

David didn't show himself to be pressing for a leadership role when God came and anointed him, when Samuel came and anointed him as the leader. Isaiah and others, they express lack of self-confidence in themselves as leaders when they're first called by God. Peter himself said, depart from me, Lord, I'm a sinful man.

He didn't say, well, you sure made a right choice in me, Jesus, because I'm obviously the right stuff. People who really are humble enough to be leaders usually don't feel like they ought to be. So when you find someone who's quite sure that they should be the leader, and even though no one else in leadership thinks they should be, they keep pushing it, that's a very unhealthy characteristic.

If you put that person in leadership, it's going to be an ego trip for them, because it already is, and they're not even in leadership. It's already an ego problem for them. How should the church deal with it? Just don't submit to the pressure.

Don't give in to the pressure the person puts on you. And explain to them that when that person is no longer ambitious, there might be some ability to seize leadership in them. Because a person who really is called to be a leader might at some point in his life be ambitious.

Moses was early in his life. When he slew the Egyptian, he saw himself as the self-appointed, or maybe even as the God-appointed, leader and deliverer of Israel. The Bible says that.

When Stephen is preaching about that in Acts chapter 7, he says when Moses slew that Egyptian to spare his buddy who was a slave, he said he thought they would understand that God had sent him to be their deliverer. And in fact, God had, but not quite yet. He did have leadership qualities, but he had to come to the place where he had no confidence in his leadership qualities before he could really be released in them.

And that's why it took four years from that time, from the time that he was ambitious to be a leader, that he came to a place where he had no ambition of being a leader. Didn't even care to be a leader. In fact, tried to make every excuse not to be one.

God said, okay, now you're ready. Now I'm calling you. Now I'm sending you.

And, you know, I'm concerned about any person that tries to force his way into leadership. I'm not concerned about a person who says, well, I'm willing to lead if there's a need here. You know, I mean, even who says, well, you know, I think I can lead.

I think I can handle this project. If you need me, you know, give me a call. But if that person isn't called or appointed or no one else recognizes them as a leader, and yet that person insists that he should be so recognized, that concerns me very much.

I mean, it would scare me if a church put a person like that into leadership. There's a person like that in a church I used to go to who, I guess he figures he's a prophet. He prophesies a lot and has a lot of ambition.

In fact, that's how most people who know him would describe him. Very ambitious. And the church has had several times, and the times I've known of them, times where they've been recruiting new people, leadership and eldership and so forth, and this guy has been bypassed.

And that's, you know, it's bugged him, you know, because he feels like he's called a leader. And maybe he is. He's got a lot of leadership qualities.

But I think ambition is still present, unless I'm judging wrongly. And that means he's not quite ready, in my opinion. A person needs to be broken pretty big time.

I think Peter had to be broken. Not before he was selected to be an apostle, but before he became a real leader. You know, he was selected for training by Jesus, but it wasn't until he denied Jesus three times and heard the cock crow that he really became totally devoid of any self-confidence and self-righteousness.

He was a broken man after that. And that is probably what qualified him to take the leading role he did later on. Just that total lack of confidence in the flesh.

So, he selected these guys that they might be sent out, but only to be sent out after they'd spent time with him, too. And this is an important thing about people who are made visible leaders or spokespersons for the church. They should be people who have spent time with Jesus.

People who have been in close fellowship with Jesus. Not just people who have the natural gifts, but people who clearly have been able to spend time with God, to become acquainted with God. That takes time.

It takes making that a priority. There's a lot of people in the leadership of the church... I can remember... I have so many anecdotes from my own past, just because I've been in a lot of different churches in the past. I've known a lot of different situations.

But a church where I was an elder for a while once had a pastor who would make sure to end the service promptly if one of the big bowl games were playing or something, because he had to get home. He really wanted to get home and see the game. And so he would even cut the church service short because he wanted to see the game and he knew other people in the church wanted to see the game.

Of course, I've never been into sports, so I wasn't very sympathetic with that. This guy lost all his kids. He had about four or five kids and they all became unbelievers.

They all rebelled. I don't profess to know why they did. The guy was a nice guy, the pastor.

He was a nice Christian man. But maybe he didn't model the kind of priorities at home that a preacher ought to or that any Christian ought to. There's nothing wrong with watching sports on television, in my opinion.

But to make that a priority in your life is definitely going to take you away from things you could be doing that would more qualify you for spiritual maturity and leadership. I mean, the people I know who are really dynamic spiritual leaders are men who, when they became Christians, nothing was important to them except to know God and to press into God and to know their Bibles. And they spent all their free time reading their Bibles.

And they were loathe to go to a movie or to watch a video or to get involved in something inconsequential, like sports, which I don't consider to be sinful. And I'm not trying to put down people who are into sports. What I am saying is that the person who spends his elective time with God by choice shows himself to have the kind of priorities that will no doubt qualify him later to be a spiritual leader.

A person whose priorities are elsewhere, who could spend time with the Lord, but would rather spend time in entertainment or some other activity, that person may not be a bad Christian, but they're not likely to be the stuff of Christian leadership, in my opinion. And there's nothing wrong with not being a Christian leader. I'm not trying to stratify the body of Christ into the elite and the non-elite.

I'm just saying that leadership is for people who have spent more than the average of their time with the Lord. Jesus wanted these women to be with him, so he could send them out. There are other people that were with him less, and he didn't send them out.

It doesn't mean he loved them less, or thought less of them. They just weren't chosen to do that. And I can usually spot a person who's going to be a leader by the fact that they spend their time seeking God.

They want to pray. They want a fellowship. They want to read their Bibles.

Those are things they want to do. Now, there are other people I meet, you have to goad

them on. You have to almost talk them into spending time reading their Bibles and things like that.

You've noticed it yourself, I'm sure. Possibly even within this student body, but over the years in every student body, I've seen this to a certain extent. Although this group is much more studious by nature than some of them have been.

But there's in your church at home, there are some people who just really want to talk about the things of God when they get together. They want to read their Bibles. They want to talk about the Scriptures.

And there's other people who aren't. Good indicator that someone, the ones who have those priorities, are the ones who are going to be called upon to provide spiritual leadership eventually. Because Jesus sends as leaders out those who are the ones who have spent their time with him.

And the way you spend your time is a matter of your own personal priorities. Everyone has the same number of hours in the day. Everyone has 24 hours.

And the way you spend that time is simply a reflection of your priorities. The way you spend your time doesn't create your priorities. It just exhibits your priorities.

And so these men, they were giving up whatever time they had previously for their jobs and for other things because they were called to be leaders. And they were called to spend all their time with Jesus. And then they would be, of course, qualified to be sent out and preach because of the extra time, the extra exposure they'd had to the Lord and to hearing his teaching and so forth.

Now, there's something else that they were called to do. In verse 15 it says, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. Now, this again, just like the preaching aspect, is something that was not limited to apostles because Stephen and Philip apparently did miracles of various kinds.

And the Seventy did. When Jesus sent out the Seventy in Luke chapter 10, they also cast out demons and came back rejoicing that the demons were subject to them in his name. However, the fact that he selected twelve, that he might give them authority to heal and to cast out demons, suggests that he didn't give that blanket authority to everyone who was following him.

These were selected from a larger group for this express purpose. That they would have authority to cast out demons and to heal the sick. Now, I understand that to mean that they had a special authority, more than the average believer did.

There were others who didn't walk with them who cast out demons. Remember in Luke chapter 9, I think it is, James and John came to Jesus and said, we met a man who

doesn't follow us, but he was casting out demons in your name and we forbade him. And Jesus said, don't forbid him to do that.

No one's going to cast out demons in my name and then immediately speak evil of me. Let him do it. We need more people doing that kind of thing.

But, it's clear that the apostles had some special calling in that area, but other people at times could do it as well. I mean, Stephen, Philip, the Seventy, had callings that also allowed them to do those kinds of things. However, again, I think it's, especially in the charismatic movement, a tendency to try to suggest that everybody should be doing these very things.

Now, I personally have cast out demons, but not very often. And I don't consider that I have special authority in that area. I believe there were times when God called on me to do it, and in the name of Jesus, it was able to be done.

Other occasions, I've been frustrated in my attempts to cast out demons. Part of that is, I'm not an apostle, I suppose. Same thing with healings.

I have laid hands on the sick and seen some healings, but I've also laid my hands on the sick and seen them get worse, and not better. But I suppose that's partly due to the fact that I'm not one of the apostles. Now, Jesus can work a miracle through any Christian, and does so, which means that you should be prepared to cast a demon out of people, or to work a miracle of healing, if that's what God puts you in the position to do, and anoints you to do, and leads you to do, and so forth.

You shouldn't feel like, well, I guess I'm not one of the apostles, therefore, I can't deal with the situation. It may be that you'll have to be a temporary apostle in that situation, because there's not another one around. And you should be prepared to do that kind of thing.

However, in the book of Acts, and elsewhere in the New Testament, the impression is given that the principal work of working wonders was an apostolic work. It says, let me see where it says this. I think it's in Acts 2. Maybe it's not.

Oh, yeah, there it is. In Acts 2, verses 41 through 43, it says, Then those who gladly received his word, this is after Peter preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, verse 41, Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, the apostles did most of the teaching, and breaking of bread and in prayers, and fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Now, here we have three thousand people become believers, but the signs and wonders are being done by the apostles. It's similar to what we read in chapter 4, how that there

were five thousand converts, and the preaching was still being done largely by the twelve apostles. Why? Because Jesus called the twelve and appointed them that he might send them out to preach, and that he might give them authority to do healings and cast out demons.

This was principally, originally, an apostolic work. Likewise, Paul speaks as if he understands it so, in 2 Corinthians 12, because he's defending his apostleship against gainsayers who say he's not really an apostle. And he defends his apostleship in a number of ways, by a number of arguments, but one of his arguments, certainly, is applicable to what we're saying right now.

Although Paul was not one of the twelve, he certainly was an apostle. And in 2 Corinthians 12, 12, Paul said, Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you, with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. He's talking about himself.

How that when he was with them, he performed signs and wonders and mighty deeds, which he calls the signs of an apostle. There are some translations that say the signs of apostleship, which is, apparently, another way of saying quite the same thing, the signs of an apostle. Now, although we admit that other people besides apostles do signs and wonders, certainly his language would suggest that not everybody runs around doing this all the time.

Or else how could such things become a sign of apostleship? If there wasn't some special dispensation given to the apostles, some special authority to work these kinds of signs and wonders that ordinary people did not possess, even other Christians did not possess, in what sense could this be called a sign of apostleship? The very suggestion that these signs and wonders were vindication of Paul's apostleship suggests, at least in my mind, imperfect as it is in my thinking and all, but it suggests to me that in those days not everyone was working signs and wonders. And those who did so regularly were giving pretty good demonstration that they had an apostolic ministry. Now, I don't know how that would translate, for instance, in our time, to persons who have signs and wonders ministries.

Certainly John Wimber appears to have an unusually high degree of success in the area of signs and wonders more than most. You know, Reinhard Bonnke and some others stand out in our minds as having particular anointing in those areas. Shall we call them apostles? Maybe.

Actually, John Wimber eschews the title. He doesn't want to be called an apostle. He refuses to take it, although some would like to put it on him.

I'm not sure what to say. They might be the closest things to apostles we have right now. I'm not sure.

All I can say is this, that if there is the assumption made that every Christian should be working in all kinds of signs and wonders, that assumption does not seem to jive well with what the information of Scripture suggests. Now, someone might appeal to Mark chapter 16, and some would. The closing verses of Mark 16, as you probably know, are not in some of the versions.

I think it's verses 12 on, or 14 on. But Jesus said in verse 16, He who believes in his baptized... Well, verse 15, Mark 16 and 17. He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe. In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents.

If they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them, and they shall lay their hands on the sick and they will recover. Now, a lot of these things have been thought, in fact this very passage has been thought by many to be the commission for all Christians to do all of these kinds of things. To cast out demons, to heal the sick, to speak in tongues.

I believe that any Christian might do any of these things on some occasions. The apostle Paul is the only apostle we know of whoever took up serpents, or any only Christian we know who did in the book of Acts. And we don't know of anyone in the Bible drinking deadly things except maybe in some places that Paul traveled the water was deadly.

I wouldn't be surprised in some places missionaries go now the water may be, as it were, deadly. And that might be part of what he's referring to there. If they drink any deadly thing it will not harm them.

But the casting out demons, the laying of hands on the sick, and so forth, are among the things that Mark himself, the same author, has told us were things that the apostles were specifically given authority to do. Furthermore, that is given in the context of his saying go into all the world and preach the gospel, which Mark also tells us in Mark 3 was what he called the twelve to do since he could send them out to preach. In other words, the suggestion could be defended that these words were principally applicable to the apostles.

And while they may have a wider application to some people besides the twelve apostles, it would not necessarily follow that they are applicable to every Christian, that every Christian is supposed to be out there doing all these things. Now, I don't mean to diminish anyone's faith, but I would like for us to put our faith in what God has said and not in what we think he said if it isn't the same thing as what he really did say. It is true, he says, these signs shall follow those who believe, though he doesn't say that every believer will be doing them.

Those who believe speaks of the believing community, the church. And where there is a believing community, there will be signs, there will be manifestations of God's power, healings, demons being cast out, and various other kinds of supernatural things that are guarantees that God is in their midst. But it is not necessary to imply from the words of Mark 16 that it is a prediction that every Christian will be doing every one of those things.

If that is predicted, it simply is a prediction that hasn't come true. Because there are many of us who believe who have never drunk poison or taken up serpents. And maybe never will.

There are some, I know, who believe who don't speak in tongues. I do, but not all who believe have. Now, by the way, he doesn't say these signs shall follow those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

They shall speak with new tongues. Then the Pentecostals could say, well then, it does come true because everyone who hasn't spoken in tongues simply hasn't been filled with the Spirit. The trouble is, I know a lot of people who are believers.

And Jesus said, these signs shall follow those who believe. I know a lot of people who are very genuine believers and no question about the genuineness of their Christianity who don't speak in tongues and have never cast out demons or healed the sick. And I guess what I'm saying is that this passage should probably not be construed in such a way as to illegitimize their Christian walk.

Although those of us who are Charismatics or Pentecostal in orientation may be in a cultural church situation that encourages us to expect all Christians to do those kinds of things. Because that's supposed to be the way of proving that you have faith. That's the proof that you really are going all the way with the Scriptures.

But I say going all the way with the Scriptures means that we understand them to say what it is they mean to say and not necessarily what our first impressions are upon reading something that gets us excited. And in my understanding, the principal task of casting out demons and healing the sick at least was first given just to the Twelve. Then it was extended on special occasions to the Seventy.

We don't know that the Seventy ever did it more than once. And in some special cases to men like Philip who was an evangelist or Stephen the martyr. And in this time, it's still going on.

Certainly Jesus still does all these same kinds of things through certain people. All I'm making my appeal for is to notice that Mark deals with this and so does the rest of Scripture as if it's not what every Christian was necessarily doing. It's what some special people were doing.

It didn't make them better Christians. It was just they had a special calling in these areas and were given special authority for these purposes. And if it doesn't mean that, it's hard to know why the language was chosen in Mark 3, 15 when it says that he chose these Twelve to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.

Obviously, the choice of the Twelve was to give them some kind of authority in that area that others did not possess, even other believers. All right, well, now we have their names and we only have a few minutes to discuss them. Let me give you this much information.

There are four lists of these names of the Apostles. One is in Matthew 10, verses 2 through 4. Then there's this one, Mark 3, verses 16 through 18. So it's Matthew 10, 2 through 4. Mark 3, 16 through 18.

Luke 6, 14 through 16. And Acts 1, 13. Now, two of these lists were written by Luke.

The one in Luke 6 and the one in Acts 1, obviously. So Luke, Mark, and Matthew are the three authors who have given us lists, although there are four lists. Now, these lists do not agree in every detail with each other.

For one thing, they don't agree in the order in which the names are given. But they agree in grouping the Apostles into three groups of four. Make three columns on your notes, if you would, and put at the head of one of them, Peter, Simon Peter.

At the head of the second column, put Philip. At the head of the third column, put James, son of Alphaeus. Under Peter, there are three names that always occur after Peter's name in all four lists, but they don't always occur in the same order.

But it's always the same four. They are Andrew, Peter's brother, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These four are always the first four listed.

Peter is always the first in all the lists, and the other three are always among the first four, but the other three are not always in the same order. For instance, in Matthew, Andrew is mentioned next after Peter. And also in Luke.

But in Mark and Acts, James is mentioned after Peter, and Andrew is put last in that four. So, I mean, it's strange. There's no accounting for it.

But then, all the lists agree in putting the fifth name as Philip. And there are three other names after his that are always the same names, though again, not always in the same order. After Philip comes Bartholomew, in that column with Philip, and Thomas and Matthew.

And it is believed that Bartholomew is to be identified with Nathaniel, the man who is called in John chapter 1, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. It is believed that

Nathaniel is another name for the same Bartholomew. So there's these four in the second group.

And Philip's always at the head of the group. The other three always follow his name, but again, not in the same order. Then, the third group is headed up by James, the son of Alphaeus.

There are three men who are always listed in his, too. The last of them in every case is Judas Iscariot. Of course, except in Acts.

In Acts, Judas is not mentioned because he was dead by the time Acts is recording. But in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Judas Iscariot is at the bottom. So in that fourth group, James of Alphaeus is at the top.

Judas is at the bottom. And between those two, there are two men. One of them is known by three different names.

In Matthew 10, that man is called Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus. That's Matthew 10, 3. Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus. So two of the names are given right there, Lebbeus and Thaddeus.

And he is so mentioned in Mark and Matthew. But in Luke's two lists, the one in Luke and the one in Acts, this man is given apparently another name, which is Judas of James. Judas of James.

Now, of James, it's not clear whether it means son of James or brother of James. And different scholars take that differently. But somehow associated with James, probably the James at the top of that list, James of Alphaeus.

So it's either that James' son was also in the Apostles or his brother was. It wouldn't be surprising if it was his brother. There's quite a few groups of brothers that are in the Apostles.

Simon and Andrew, James and John, James and Jude in this case. There's other James. There's two Jameses and two Judes.

Judas is another name for Jude. But apparently Judas of James is the same man as Lebbeus and Thaddeus. This is deduced by the fact that it's the only name that can only be accounted for in that way.

The other party that we have not mentioned yet is Simon the Canaanite or Simon Zelotes. Now the word Canaanite, unfortunately in the King James and the New King James, is spelled like Canaanite in the Old Testament, the people of Canaan. However, the Greek word actually doesn't mean a Canaanite in that sense.

But it's a different word, a Canaanian, which literally means a zealot. He was a member

of the Zealot Party, which was a very militant, patriotic Jewish party. They came to their end at Masada in 73 A.D. And they were the ones who sparked the war, the Jewish war, because of their zealousness against the Romans.

But Simon the Canaanite, as he's called in both Matthew and Mark, or Simon Zelotes, which means Simon the Zealot in Luke and Acts. Now you should have three columns. And you can see that although there's quite a variety of the way the names are listed, there are certain things that don't change.

One is that the first, the fifth, and the ninth names, in each case, are always the same. Peter is first, Philip is the fifth, and James of Alphaeus is the ninth. And the three names that follow these three, in each case, are the same names, though sometimes mixed up in different orders among themselves, which suggests that Jesus may have organized the twelve apostles into three groups.

If you look at the actual names in those groups, it makes sense. The first group, Peter's group, are the ones we know best. James and John and Andrew, these are the apostles we have the most information about, both in the Gospels and in Acts.

And we know that three of those four were what we call the inner circle, and Andrew was added to that on one occasion in the account of the Olivet Discourse. So, those four guys are very prominent apostles. The next group, under Philip, are the next best-known group of apostles.

That is, we don't have much on them, but we have more on them than the ones in the last group. Philip and Nathanael receive special attention in John chapter 1, and also they come up again later on. Philip particularly comes up in the Upper Room Discourse and when the Greeks came to see Jesus later on.

So, he's not totally without mention elsewhere. Thomas is memorable because he speaks on a couple of occasions in the Gospels. Once he says, let us go to Jerusalem with Jesus and die with him there.

And then, of course, in his more memorable statement, he said, I won't believe it until I put my finger in the holes in his hands and so forth. So, he's remembered as doubting Thomas, usually. Matthew, of course, is the tax collector, also known as Levi, by the way.

He's sometimes called Levi in the Bible. But, he's the same guy. We know something about him because his call is recorded.

So, the second group is the lesser known apostles, lesser than the first group, but more than the guys in the last group, except for Judas Iscariot, who we know only too well. But, James of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and the other guy who you could call the three-named apostle, Lebbeus, Thaddeus, Judas of James. Those three guys are extremely

obscure.

Judas of James, that is Thaddeus, Lebius, is mentioned one time as speaking. He has a speaking part one time in John chapter 14, where it says, Judas, not Iscariot, asked him, how is it that you'll show yourself to us and not to the world? But, apart from that one place where it says, Judas, not Iscariot, we don't have any other references to this man, specifically. Simon the Zealot, there's not a word mentioned about him, except his name appears in the list.

We don't have any information about anything he said or did, anywhere in the Bible. James of Alpheus is also not well known to us. So, we'd have to say the first group were very prominent apostles.

The second group were somewhat less prominent, and the last group were extremely obscure, except, of course, for Judas Iscariot, and he only became prominent by his treachery. And, so, we don't know much about some of these guys. We do know that there were a number of brothers among them, as I pointed out.

We also know that there are some duplications of names, but that made simply because there were so many names that were common names and held by a number of people. There's also an interesting fact that it would appear that some of them were related to Jesus. Depending on who Alpheus was, some people believe that Alpheus was an uncle to Jesus.

If so, then James, the son of Alpheus, and Judas, who was either the son of or the brother of James, would have been cousins of Jesus. Likewise, the sons of Zebedee were probably first cousins of Jesus. Let me know, have I gone over the material that demonstrated that in the past? I've done that in one of the places I teach, but I don't know if I've done it in this particular class.

Did I show you the cross-references that would show that the sons of Zebedee, James, and John were cousins of Jesus? You don't remember it? Let me give it to you real quickly. It is deduced. Matthew 27, verse 56.

Speaking of the women that followed Jesus to the cross, it said, "...among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons." This would apparently be three different women. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and someone else who was the mother of Zebedee's sons, which were James and John. Look now, you may want to keep your finger there, but look over at John 19, 25.

Giving again the women who followed Jesus to the cross, it says, "...now there stood by the cross Jesus of Jesus, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." Now, Mary Magdalene was mentioned in Matthew. Mary the wife of

Clopas was probably in Matthew the Mary the mother of James and Joseph. Then there's, of course, Mary the mother of Jesus was not mentioned in Matthew, but here we have his mother's sister who is not named.

Now, in Matthew and in John we have in this list an unnamed woman. She is called the sister of Jesus' mother, which makes her Jesus' aunt. She is said to be the mother of Zebedee's children, if it's the same woman.

The other place of significance is in Mark 15, and verse, excuse me, Mark 16, I guess, no, 15, verse 40. It says, "...there were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene," who's been in the other list as well, "...Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joseph," she was mentioned also, "...and Salome, whose name does not appear in the other lists, and is believed to be the woman who is said to be the sister of Jesus' mother, and the mother of Zebedee's children." Now, if Salome is, in fact, the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, then she was Jesus' aunt. That would make her children his first cousins.

If she was the mother of Zebedee's children, as appears to be the case, that would make James and John first cousins of Jesus, which means that he chose men, in some cases, that were related to him. And since Peter and Andrew were business partners with James and John, it seems likely that Jesus may have well been acquainted with them also, even through other means than those simply recorded in the Gospels. There's many things we're not told directly, and why we're not told them directly in the Gospels, I don't know, but they can be deduced, and we can see that some of these people were closer to Jesus than others, and some of them may have even been, were, apparently, relatives of Jesus.

I'd also point out that Jesus didn't mind putting someone like a tax collector and a zealot together who were of opposite political persuasions, because they were to represent the whole church, as it were, and the whole church was going to be made up of people of every political race.