



World Christian Fellowship

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Apostles- Introduction

Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:12-16, *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.¹³ And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;¹⁵ Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;¹⁶ Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.*

We are going to study these twelve men. This will be very encouraging because we are going to find that these were very common men, called, equipped, and empowered for a very uncommon ministry.

This is consistent with what God does.

He deals with the common and He lifts them up to amazing, usefulness.

When their lives have a powerful impact on the world, it is clear to everybody that it is not because of them but by God.

Luke introduces the Pharisees and the scribes, teachers of the law in Chapter 5. From then on there is an increasing conflict between the organised religious group and Jesus.

It is the time of escalating hostility.

It is the time of the hatred of Jesus among the religious leaders of Judaism and it has reached its apex.

It is precisely at that time that Jesus can feel the heat of His coming death.

It is time then to prepare His official representatives. So, Jesus feeling the hatred, hostility, sensing the inevitability of His execution coming realizes that there are going to have to be some key men who can carry on the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of Israel.

Jesus also look for the people who will establish the church and not much time left with Him.

Now is the time to choose them.

Now is the time to begin their intense training.

His own coming death Jesus realizes that He must choose some who are going to carry on the work after He is gone.

These 12 men will be the official preachers of the gospel who will carry not only His message but His authority.

Jesus does not choose a

- Rabbi,
- Scribe,
- Pharisee,
- Sadducee,
- Priest.

Not anyone who connected with religious establishment.

Choosing of the twelve apostles was not only preparation for His own death and the future proclamation of the gospel, but it was also a judgment on Judaism.

It was a judgment on the current corrupt leaders of Israel's religion. The Lord did not choose one of them.

He chose men who were not theologically trained, who were not scribes, not priests, not Pharisees, and not Sadducees.

He chose men who were common men.

Four of them were fishermen.

One of them was a tax collector.

One of them was a money grubber who turned out to be a traitor.

We do not know the occupations of the rest of them, but they were commoners.

Jesus totally ignored the religious establishment, theologically trained, those who saw themselves as the religious nobility of Israel.

The reason was because they resented Him and hated Him. They rejected Him and His message.

John 1:11, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

Gospel of John list as the first official act of Jesus' ministry at Jerusalem at the Passover. This is the time when it was filled with people from all over the nation to offer prayer and to celebrate the Passover and offer sacrifice.

Jesus went into the temple and He made a whip of chords and He struck a devastating blow at the religion of Judaism.

- ✓ He exposed their bankruptcy spiritually.
 - ✓ He exposed their apostasy.
 - ✓ He exposed their sin.
 - ✓ He exposed their corruption.
 - ✓ He exposed their deception.
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- We know little bit about Peter because he is dominant in the gospel account.
 - We make a lot out of Paul who was a late apostle and who was a Pharisee.

- We make something out of James and something out of John, maybe a little bit out of Philip and Andrew.
- We know little bit about the story of Matthew, and we identify with him because he wrote his gospel.

But for the most part, they are not heroes to us and that is sad.

The Lord cannot choose any from the leadership of Israel, they become the new and true spiritual leaders for Israel.

- They are going to go and preach the gospel.
- They are going to preach the New Covenant.
- They are the new and true spiritual leaders in Israel to preach the new and true covenant of salvation by grace and faith alone.
- They are the ones to bring about a new and true Israel of God.
- They are going to give birth to the church.

None of the religious elite of Israel qualify, so the Lord chooses twelve very, very ordinary men. This is consistent with the way the Lord works.

Choosing the 12 by Prayer:

Jesus goes into the mountain and spent the whole night in prayer to God. If He went up there when it was still light, He

would have gone up there somewhere around seven o'clock or eight o'clock.

If He came back when it was dawn, He would have come back at six in the morning. It says He spent the whole night. To spend the whole night is a lot of words in English.

Jesus spent the whole night in prayer to God. In Greek it says, He spent the whole night in the prayer of God. We find that He was not only man, but here He is God. It is the prayer of God.

What that indicates to us is that He is now engaged in inter-trinitarian communion. It is the very prayer of God that is going on there as the two members of the Trinity are communing with one another.

So here is Jesus in His humanity having to pray all night to get clarity on this matter and Jesus in His deity praying the very prayer of God.

The word "disciple" in Greek '*Mathts*', the best English equivalent is "student." More precise word would be "learner." Sometimes you think of a student as somebody who goes to school but does not necessarily learn anything, so maybe "learner" is better.

What happened in ancient times, both in the Greek culture and the Jewish culture is when there was a prominent rabbi or a

prominent orator, prominent philosopher, prominent teacher, they would attract people.

Still true today.

Only in those days they would not go to an auditorium to hear this person speak, or listen to his tapes or read his books, since those things were not available to them.

They would follow him around and typically they were itinerant teachers who went from place to place and taught the way that Jesus did, and they would collect followers.

Massive amount of people followed Jesus because His teaching was absolutely beyond anything anybody had ever heard. He had the ability to heal diseases and cast out demons and do miraculous things including control fish. He had all this supernatural power and His profound supernatural truth. He drew people at a rate that nobody else had ever drawn them.

So, Jesus had a great number of disciples.

Out of this large group, some who came on their own, some that He already has identified and asked to follow Him, out of that group, that collective group, the Lord is going to pick twelve.

By the will of God revealed in that night of prayer, He knows exactly who they are. Jesus calls all the disciples together, all the learners, all the *mathts*, all His students.

This was a very special moment for those twelve. Up to this point, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Nathanael, Matthew, they were just in the crowd. They were just learners. They were just sort of following and listening and observing and watching and absorbing.

They did not yet have any specific purpose.

They had not yet been called to any specific office or given any specific responsibility until this moment.

John 15:16, You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Why twelve?

Why not eight?

Why not twenty-four, why twelve?

Because there were twelve tribes in Israel.

New Leadership:

This was symbolic.

Israel was apostate.

The Judaism of the time of Jesus was not the truth of the Old Testament.

- It was not the true worship of the true God.
- It was a system of self-righteous works and ceremonies, it was apostate.
- It was heretical.

This was time for a new leadership in Israel and the apostles were the new leaders of the new, true Israel of God who would believe the gospel. Jesus is calling for a new leadership for the whole nation.

Judgement on Israel:

a) Millennial Kingdom

It also a judgment on the current leadership. These apostles were the new leaders bringing the New Covenant message for a new Israel.

Luke 22:29-30, *And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

That is the millennial kingdom.

That is the future kingdom of Christ.

God has granted Jesus a kingdom and someday He is going to come into that kingdom.

Jesus tells them that they are going to be in His kingdom. He is going to grant them they will be there and when He receives His kingdom. The throne of David in the city of Jerusalem, Mount Zion, when Jesus rule the world in the kingdom coming, Jesus is going to grant the apostles to sit at His table and eat and drink in His kingdom.

You will also judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

That proves the point that the apostles were chosen to be the leaders over a new Israel and some day in the kingdom, the Millennial Kingdom, each tribe of Israel, each tribe will then be made up of believing Jews.

b) Eternal Kingdom

The twelve tribes are going to be identified in the time of tribulation because twelve thousand out of every tribe will be chosen to preach the gospel, totalling 144 thousand.

All Israel will be saved. There will be converted people out of every tribe in Israel. They will go into the kingdom. Each of those tribes will therefore be identified and one of the apostles will literally sit on a throne ruling over that new spiritual true believing Israel.

So, the apostles are significant. They were not just destined for commonality. During the Millennial Kingdom they are going to sit on thrones and rule the tribes of Israel.

In the end of the book of Revelation you have a description of heaven and you have a description of the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city.

Revelation 21:12-14, *Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. ¹⁴Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Not only are they going to reign in the Millennial Kingdom, but they are going to be immortalized eternally in the foundation. Their name is going to be emblazoned in the gold foundations of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, forever and ever.

We know about a lot of heroes, but when you get to heaven someday and you walk through those gates of the city, the New Jerusalem, the glorious city of New Jerusalem. Those twelve gates, three on each side, it's a four-square city, when you walk through those gates at the top of each gate there's going to be a name and the name at the top of the gate is going to be one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

But there is going to be a name at the bottom of every gate is going to be the name of an apostle. They are going to have an eternal tribute in heaven, and we ought to know about them from the Scripture and from history.

Every time you go into the city you are going to go over the name of an apostle and under the name of the tribes of Israel. This is to show that God once brought the truth of His saving message through the tribes of Israel, and then again later through the twelve apostles.

Now these men are important then.
They are eternally important.

We do not want you wandering through the gate and not knowing whose name is below you!

So, we want to learn about these men here.
Jesus named them as apostles.

The Greek verb ***apostell*** means to send from or sent away.
This word is not translated its transliterated.

Instead of translating the Greek word "apostle," apostolos, we just give it an English pronunciation, "apostle" instead of "sent ones." In Tamil as Aposthalar.

The common language in Israel at the time of Jesus was not Hebrew. The common language was Aramaic and there was a Jewish institution at the time of our Lord called **shahlia**, which is an Aramaic word for apostle.

The **shahlia** referred to any official representative of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a group of seventy men.

Sanhedrin basically means, the seventy, a group of seventy men who ruled Israel.

Sanhedrin had a tremendous amount of power and a tremendous amount of authority. They delegated to official representatives and they would send them out with all of their authority to act in their behalf, usually to settle legal disputes, disputes about the law of God, or religious disputes.

Famous prominent rabbis also had **shahlia**. They had sent ones who would carry their authority and teach their message and represent them.

So, the Jewish people were very used to apostles, those who were the official representatives of authoritative persons.

Jesus did the same. He did something very familiar to everybody.

✓ I am going to have My own **shahlia**,

- ✓ I am going to have My own apostles just as the Sanhedrin does, just as the famous rabbis always have.

Jesus was saying that I Am going to have My own sent ones who are going to bear the authority, power, and the doctrine.

What Jesus here has then is twelve men to whom He will delegate

- ✓ His power,
- ✓ His authority,
- ✓ His message, and
- ✓ they will go and represent Him as official representatives.

The Jews understood this in the Jewish Mishna, which is ancient Jewish writing.

“Apostle” then was a title of great respect, a title of great honour and a title of privilege and a title of authority because it bore with its power. Jesus is saying, I am now identifying you twelve as My official representatives.

Mark 3:14-15, *Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,¹⁵ and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:*

Two-step process.

1. They might be with Him
2. He might send out to preach

Before they could be sent out to preach, it was critical that they be with Jesus.

This was critical to their training.

Jesus calls the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. He literally delegated to them His miracle power.

Now it is not until chapter 9 in the Gospel of Luke and Matthew 10.

- ✓ Jesus identifying them,
- ✓ Trains them.
- ✓ Give them miracle power to cast out demons.
- ✓ He will send them out.

Initially they were following Jesus.

They were first call to be disciples and for many of them that was their conversion.

Then over a time they were called to leave everything. They left everything and followed Him.

So first they were called to believe in Him.

Then they were called to drop everything and follow Him.

Out of that group who have dropped everything and followed Him, and He called them to Himself. Now He identifies them as apostles.

Later He will gift them miraculously and finally He will send them out.

They will go out on short-term, mission opportunities to preach and heal and do great miracles and then they will come back.

Finally, Jesus leaves the earth, and they go out for good on their own.

These are the apostles.

Luke mentions them 6 times in his gospel and about 30 times in the book of Acts because their role is so central not only to the ministry of the gospel to Israel, but the founding of the church as he records it in the book of Acts.

a) Foundation

They were the real foundation of the church.

Ephesians 2:20, *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,*

They were the real foundation of the church. They were the first spiritual leaders of the new Israel and the church.

b) Divine Revelation

The Apostles received truth by divine revelation.

Ephesians 3:5, *which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:*

They did not preach a human message, they had divine revelation.

c) Source of Doctrine

The apostles were the source of doctrine.

When the early church meets, they got together and studied the apostles' doctrine.

Acts 2:42, *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

So, they were critical, they were the first line of people in the life of the new Israel and the church. They were the instruments of the gospel foundationally. They were the recipients of divine revelation which shows up in the New Testament epistles and they were the source of doctrine.

d) Build the Church

Apostles were given to edify the church.

Ephesians 4:11-12, *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

They were the early teachers.

They were the first preachers and first teachers in the church.

Their problems

1. Lacked spiritual understanding.

That is a serious handicap in doing spiritual work.

They were thick, dull, stupid, and blind. Those are terms or English equivalents of terms used to describe them in the New Testament.

Just do not get it.

Just do not understand it.

They did not understand anything.

Over and over and over and over we will read that in Matthew, in Mark, in Luke, in John.

What did Jesus remedy their lack of spiritual understanding?

Teaching!

Teaching and teaching until His death.

Teaching even after His resurrection from the grave.

Acts 1:3, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

2. Humility

They were self-consumed, self-centred, and self-promoting, and proud.

We may ask has Jesus have not found some humble men.

There are not any.

They spend most of their time arguing about who would be the greatest among them.

Mark 9:33-37, *Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?"* ³⁴ *But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.* ³⁵ *And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."* ³⁶ *Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,* ³⁷ *"Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."*

Matthew 20:20-28

James and John have the boldness to send their mother to Jesus because he was related to Jesus' mother. They thought they could play that card, so they sent their mother.

Please can my boys sit on your right hand in the kingdom?

Rest of the disciples heard about it and were furious, not because they were so holy and righteous, they didn't like to see pride, but because James and John might have gained something that they then would have lost.

How did Jesus overcome their lack of humility?

By setting an example of humility to them.

3. Faith

At least four times in the gospel of Matthew He calls them "*Oh you of little faith.*" (**Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20**)

That is hard to deal with. He even said told them in **Mark 4:40**, "How is it that you have no faith?"

Mark 16:14, *Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.*

That is discouraging.

That is not the beginning of the story, but the end of it.

They were tough.

They lacked understanding.

They lacked humility.

They lacked faith.

How did Jesus try to remedy their lack of faith?

By constantly doing miracles.

The miracles were not primarily for the unbelievers.

They were for the disciples so that their faith could be strengthened.

4. Commitment

They followed for a little while and then they kind of drifted away.

As long as there were miracles all over the place, and as long as everything was going great and the crowds were there, it was fine.

But as soon as the soldiers came into the garden to arrest Jesus, they were gone.

Mark 14:50, *Then they all forsook Him and fled.*

Peter ends up denying Jesus on three different occasions the night of Jesus trial.

How did Jesus remedy their proneness to defection?

Praying for them.

John 17 we find Jesus praying as High Priest!

Jesus prayed and prayed for His own that they would be faithful and that the Father would bring them to heaven.

5. Power

They lacked power.

There were times when they could not cast out demons even when they tried. They were faithless and so they could not harness the power that was available to them.

They were weak and helpless and confronted with the enemy.

What did Jesus do to remedy that?

By empowering them with Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, He sent the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be ^[c]witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Conclusion:

Now you look at this group and what would be your response?

This is my answer:

I would not have picked them.

I would have found another group.

Who needs people with no understanding, no humility, no faith, no commitment, and no power?

Just perfect candidates for God to use because then there is no human explanation for what happened.

That is the church.

Still the same way today.

Jesus saw their weakness, but He saw behind it potential to change the world.

The chaff was visible and lots of people could not see the kernel of wheat behind it, but He did.

Some people would have seen nothing but a stone, a dirty brown stone, but He saw the diamond inside and He knew He could transform them. In the end, all the glory would come to Him.

So, Jesus took them as they were,
Taught them,
Set an example before them,
Did miracles,
Prayed, and
Gave them the Holy Spirit.

We are all sitting here are testimony to the fact that they changed the world.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21, *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*

It was a foolish message and foolish preachers.
It was beneath the elite.

You look at the church:

Where are the massive minds of the world and where are the great writers and the great orators of the world?

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

They are so far down the list it is as if they do not even exist, the nobodies, that they might nullify the somebodies in order that no man should boast before God.

God chooses who He chooses in order that He might receive the glory.

He chooses whom He chooses in order that people might say, it cannot be through him that this was accomplished, it must be God.

So, Jesus chose four fishermen, He chose a despised tax collector. He chose a traitorous money grubber and the rest of the no-name commoners, and by them changed the world forever.

Acts 4:13, *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

They had been with Jesus.