

# Why Those Twelve?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet sources)

## Introduction:

A. Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16

1. The condition and character of those whom Jesus chose to be apostles.
2. Some might think that Jesus would choose apostles from the angels of heaven. He chose men to be his apostles.
3. What kind of men did He choose? Most would think He would certainly choose the wisest and most learned men, or the wealthiest and most important men in the world.
4. But He chose poor, unlearned men who had not been heard of before. Fishermen, tax-collectors, men occupying humble, unappreciated positions in life, were the men Jesus chose to be apostles.
5. When their work was done, no one would be able to say that it was the learning, or wisdom, or riches, or power of men by whom that work was accomplished. God works great wonders through small things.
  - a. 1Cor. 1:27-29

## I. THEIR MEASURE

- A. Jesus had come to a critical point in His ministry. Opposition was mounting and He needed to choose twelve men for special grooming as against the day when He ascended back to the Father. Jesus was not going to write a book but entrust His work to twelve eyewitnesses.
- B. Consider His choice
  1. A prayerful choice - Luke 6:12-13
  2. A difficult choice - Acts 1:12-26. Consider how much effort was put into replacing Judas
  3. A critical choice - Consider the fact that Jesus spent all night in prayer over a matter that, as God the Son, He would know would have a successful outcome. That is how important this was
  4. A discriminating choice... the criteria Jesus didn't use:
    - a. Social status - they were ordinary men - Acts 4:13
    - b. Political views - Simon the Zealot was in all probability an extreme nationalist; Matthew co-operated with the Romans in collecting taxes.
    - c. Personalities - Peter was impulsive, passionate, but innately conservative. James and John were called Sons of Thunder and were ambitious, fervent, but thoughtful. Thomas had a gloomy, pessimistic, intense disposition. Matthew was gregarious and methodical; Philip was hesitant and lacking confidence; Andrew positive and enterprising.
    - d. Character - every one of the Twelve had flaws. Peter hungered for approval. James and John were intolerant and ambitious. Judas was devious, secretive, and materialistic. Thomas was self-centered and resentful.

- e. Aptitude and abilities - they were slow learners. We read little in the NT about five of the twelve. They are nearly anonymous.
  - f. Spiritual maturity - the Twelve were always getting into trouble, missing the point of Jesus' teaching, lashing out at people who were different, saying and wanting the wrong things. Yet Jesus said, "Did I not choose you, the twelve..." (John 6:70), and "I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18).
5. The criteria Jesus did use:
- a. They were teachable - The hardest people to convert to Christ are academics, adherents to other faiths, and the apathetic. Intellectual and religious baggage, and indifference closes minds to the gospel.
  - b. They were believers - All the disciples, including Judas, believed Jesus was the Messiah who would establish God's kingdom.
    - 1) John 6:67
  - c. They were committed to Him - Mark 14:31
6. A purposeful choice - Jesus chose His apostles for good reasons:
- a. Companionship - Mark 3:14, 14:37; Luke 22:15; John 17:11-16
  - b. To become apostles and preachers - Mark 3:14
  - c. To be eyewitnesses - Acts 1:21-22

## II. THEIR MISSION

- A. Involved discipleship - "that they should be with Him" - Mark 3:14
  - 1. Every disciple's first priority is being with Jesus.
  - 2. Second is being a disciple, not a director
  - 3. Third is being dedicated, not casually interested
  - 4. James 4:8; John 13:23; Jer. 29:13
- B. Involved declaration - they were called to go "forth to preach"
  - 1. Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15
- C. Involved demonstration - Their preaching was to be accompanied by miracles.
  - 1. Acts 3:1-12
  - 2. We do not need miracles to validate the message; that work has been completed - 1Cor. 13:8-13
    - a. Our validation of the word is now by transformed lives
    - b. Matt. 5:16; Rom. 12:2

## III. THE MEN

- A. Their names
  - 1. Simon, a Hebrew name. It means "a stone". Jesus changes his name to "Peter." This is a Greek name and it also means "a stone." Peter was the leader of the group. He was a fisherman with a family. He was outspoken and opinionated. He failed the Lord in a very public manner, but he humbled himself and was restored. He was used by the Lord in many and mighty ways in the early church.
  - 2. James was a fisherman. He was a member of the Lord's inner circle. James, Peter, and John were singled out for a special time of ministry three times: when the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead; when Jesus was transfigured; and

when Jesus went a little farther into Gethsemane to pray. James was a great leader in the early church, serving as an elder in the church at Jerusalem. He was the first of the Apostles to be martyred for the faith.

3. John was the brother of James, also a member of that inner circle. John was known as the “Beloved Disciple.” He was a mighty influence in the early church, writing five books of the New Testament. John was the only Apostle not put to death for the faith, but he was persecuted, imprisoned and banished to an island. These two brothers were nicknamed “Boanerges” by the Lord Jesus. This name means “the sons of thunder.” This name fits because they had tempers, even wanting to call down fire on a village that refused to receive the Lord Jesus (Luke 9:52-56). They also had a little bit of selfish ambition because they asked Jesus for a place of special prominence in the Kingdom (Mark 10:35-40).

4. Andrew was the brother of Peter. He had been a fisherman before he came to Christ, and every time he appears in the Gospel record, he is bringing someone to Jesus. Andrew was a powerful and uninhibited witness for the Lord.

5. Philip - little is known about him. Jesus calls him in John 1:43.

Immediately Philip goes to tell Nathaniel about Jesus (John 1:44-45).

6. Bartholomew is also known as Nathaniel. He seems to have been a man with some issues with prejudice - John 1:45-46. He was also a man of honesty and deep religious conviction - John 1:47.

7. Matthew was a Jew named Levi. He had been a tax collector for Rome. He was a controversial choice and was no doubt despised by many of the people - Mark 2:14. But the Lord called him and changed his life. Matthew would write the Gospel that bears his name.

8. Thomas is sometimes condemned as a doubter. We do know that he was loyal to Jesus, even to the point of being willing to die with Him - John 11:16. He was the only disciple not cowering in fear in the upper room on the day Jesus rose from the dead - John 20:19, 24. He was a doubter of the unseen - John 20:29

9. James the son of Alphaeus - little is known about this man. His mother was at the cross when Jesus was crucified - John 19:25.

10. Thaddaeus, Jude, or Lebbaeus - little is known about this disciple.

11. Simon the Canaanite - The word “Canaanite” translates as word that means “zealous.” Simon was a revolutionary. He was a Jew sworn to the overthrow of the Roman government. He was probably idealistic, proud, radical, outspoken, fiery and fearless.

12. Judas Iscariot, the only disciple to come from Judea (Cherioth). He was the treasurer of the group, but he was also a thief and a miser - John 12:5-6. Judas would eventually betray Jesus into the hands of the Jews for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave - Matt. 26:7-15. He died a suicide.

a. Why Judas? - John 13:18-20

B. Their natures - they were human and subject to all that implies.

1. Nevertheless, the Lord was able to transform them and use them. He took the last twelve men one would choose to conquer a kingdom, and

made them into an unstoppable force that turned the world upside down and changed it forever.

2. These men, who often lacked understanding, found ways to get into trouble, squabbled among themselves, were prejudiced against some of the people they were to teach, said the wrong things often, and sometimes ran away in fear, were chosen by the Lord and Creator to do the most important work that would ever be done by human hands; they carried the gospel into all the world.
3. In 21 years, the world was forever transformed. Just as the world was forever changed by the fall of man, the world was changed even more profoundly by the Gospel.

Conclusion:

A. Two lessons come of this:

1. It doesn't matter who you are, what you were, or what you bring; the Lord will find a place for you to be powerful and effective in His kingdom
2. There is no power active in this world greater than the Gospel