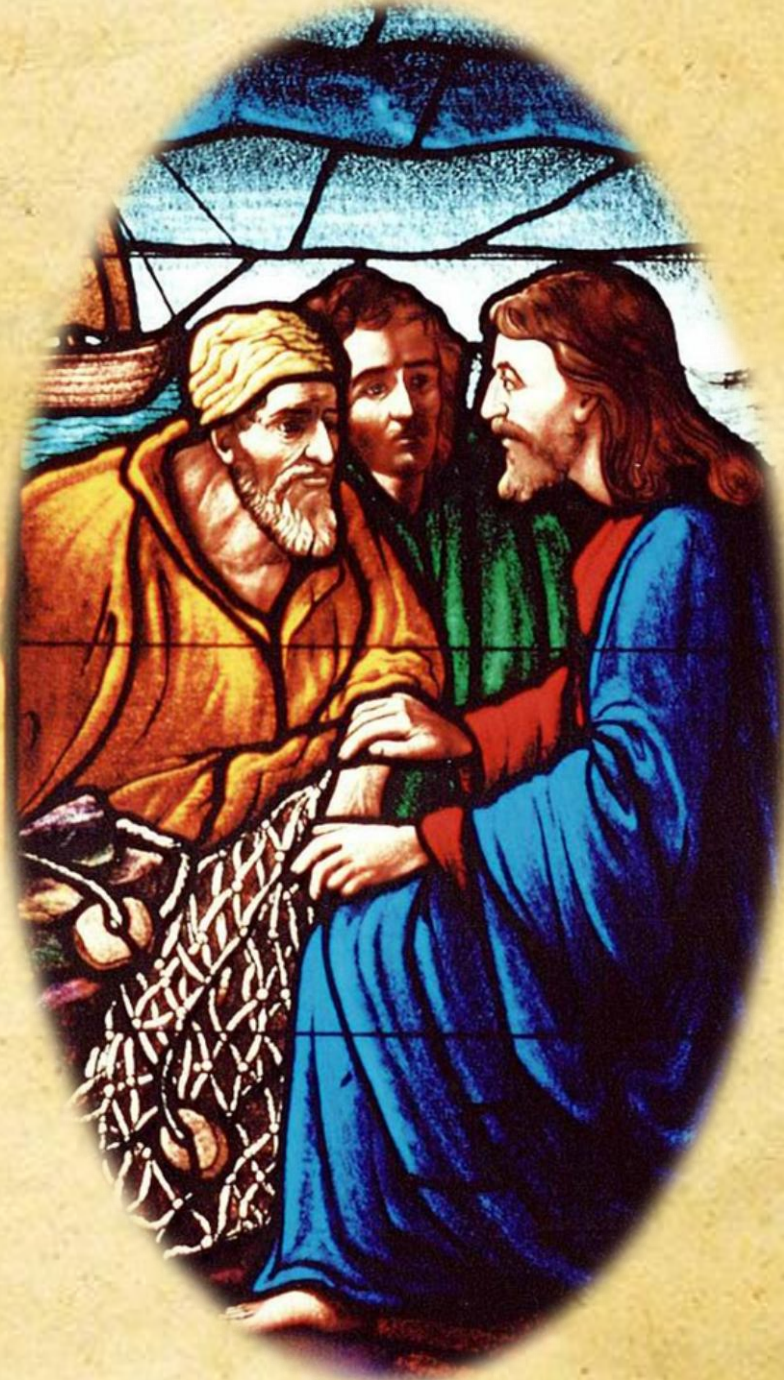


Chapter 5

JESUS GATHERS DISCIPLES



"FISHERS OF MEN", compliments of Austin Avenue United Methodist Church, Waco, TX

SETTING THE STAGE

Whether it was while our Lord walked among the dew covered lilies of the field, strolled along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or prayed on the hillside above Nazareth that a crucial conversation occurred between himself and God concerning the time his ministry was to begin, man does not know. We are told of his visits and debates among the priests in the temple and synagogues, but nothing about the intimate circumstances leading up to the time he took his first step into the final three years of his life. However, given the window of time for launching his ministry and his fast approaching crucifixion, it is no wonder that he moved with such resolute actions. If the message, after his ascension into heaven that the kingdom of God had arrived on earth was to survive and be delivered to all generations, time was of the essence.



Certainly, the Bible made clear that his cousin, John the Baptist, had identified his own mission as to prepare the way of the Lord; a directive from God that was made clear even to his parents prior to his birth. From the beginning of John's ministry, his teaching methods and manner of dress set him apart from the crowd. However, he not only stayed focused on his mission, but also attracted disciples who followed his beliefs. Even though totally centered on the work at hand, it is important to note that he looked outside himself and was able and willing to identify Jesus as the Lamb of God when he saw him pass by; an act that cost him some disciples. He not only kicked off the ministry of Jesus by baptizing him in the Jordan River, but had the wisdom and courage to know when to step aside. Then, to unselfishly relinquish his ministry so that one greater than himself could move

onto center stage, displayed wisdom, courage, and great humility. Although he needed later to be sent a message from Jesus that he had identified him correctly as the Messiah, he moved on from that moment of doubt. Take a second and walk in his footsteps! Could you have done this magnificent selfless deed?

"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3: 17 (NIV); the words Jesus heard from his Father after being baptized by John that must have filled him with joy and courage for the journey ahead. For us, it also displayed actions of humility and obedience in the Son's relationship with God the Father. In addition,

it is important to note how directly tied baptism was to our Messiah's life as a Jew; a religious ceremony that occurred from birth forward that carried great significance to his people.



(Ary Scheffer 1795-1858)

Yet, from that period of elation, Jesus was led directly out into the desert by the Holy Spirit where he would stay 40 days and nights to confront the real enemy of Israel; Satan. This time can be directly related to the Old Testament's account of the children of Israel being led out of bondage from Egypt where they failed to trust God for their daily bread, provision of water, and obedience of worshipping only one God.

In facing the temptations set forth by Satan, Jesus relied directly on the teachings of the Torah with the following Scriptures in reply:

Deuteronomy 8: 3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 6:13-14: "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

Thus, after enduring hardships and temptations for 40 days and nights, and having been comforted and restored by God's angels at the end, the three years of Jesus' ministry on earth began.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN:

Let us now revisit the educational structure as found in the book, Education Among The Jews by Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D, when he described the advanced learning stage of students. It was at this time that the more astute young men would approach a rabbi and request to be his students. In his description Kretzmann reported that only those deemed by the rabbi as the cream of the crop would be selected as being worthy of sitting in his presence; a time so rigorous that it lasted only 3 years for the students. (The following painting by Tissot of Jesus commanding his disciples to rest shows how aware the Lord was of the importance of restoration for enduring the difficult journey ahead.



In the book, [The Jew Named Jesus](#) by Rebekah Simon-Peter, she describes rabbis and their disciples traveling around the byways of the Holy Land as a common occurrence. Then, as these itinerate groups moved from one location to another, the teachers frequently would sit and debate one another on different religious topics. In addition, the fact that they had literally memorized the Scriptures word for word, added to the drama of a discussion that might confuse Christians when reading the New Testament. An example of this technique can be found in Matthew 21: 16 when Jesus replied to the chief priests and teachers of the law's objections to children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Our Lord, in all his wisdom, simply quoted a portion of the Scripture from **Psalm 8: 2, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise,"** causing those objecting to make a quick departure. Given the fact the opposition had committed the Scripture to memory, they added, **"because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger"** in their own minds; thus ending the debate."

Therefore, having been trained in this method, Jesus the Jewish Rabbi, chose to organize the gathering of his disciples in a similar manner; but not identical. Jesus possessing the wisdom from his Father would shock mankind both then and now, as to the way his selection process was carried out.



The
Pharisees
come out
and begin
to debate
with him.
(Painting by
Tissof)

GATHERING HIS DISCIPLES

When Jesus first began his ministry, he labored single handedly in a limited area using a teaching technique that was elementary. It would be thought of in education as the first step to comprehension called the literal level. He kept his instruction simple so those listening would be able to grasp his meaning. Then, after narrowing his selection down to 12, his teachings would deepen and become more elaborate. His goal would then be the training of the twelve disciples; a mission that had to be accomplished in record time before he ascended back to the Father. It was imperative they have the knowledge and faith to carry on so that all would not be lost for humanity.

Therefore, Jesus reversed the process followed by the rabbis of the time. Instead of selecting the recognized “cream of the crop” that had approached him, he chose 12 ordinary men with high morals and character knowing they were teachable. Also, since the learned men objected to his methods and beliefs, the so called, “cream of the crop” would not have considered Jesus worthy to follow. “Twelve Ordinary Men” by John MacArthur best summed up the approach of Jesus by stating, “The strategy of Jesus from the time he began his public ministry was bold and enormously controversial; so much that after preaching in the synagogues in his home town of Nazareth, his own community members tried to kill him. The

choosing of the 12 apostles was a judgment against institutionalized Judaism; a renunciation of those men and organizations which had become totally corrupt." **John 1:11 "They hated him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him,"** substantiates this fact. That the Jewish religion was focused on the physical descent of Abraham rather than faith in God caused Jesus to strongly object with enormous passion.

However, having stated this, it is important to point out that it was against corruption and those associated with it that he objected. Jesus loved his people and desperately wanted them to follow him. (The first people of The Way were Jews that believed Jesus was the Messiah.) Before pointing our fingers at the Jews and the persecution of Jesus, it is important to balance our thoughts and recall that Tyndale who pioneered the translation of Scripture into English so that the masses might have access to the Bible, was strangled and burned at the stake by church leaders. (Christians, not Jews)

THE TWELVE

As the writer researched information about the 12 disciples, not only was there controversy about their lives, but little known facts available concerning many of them. Most authors simply used Scripture and determined on their own the personality of some. Literally little to no information was available about many of the twelve. There was even disagreement among the scholars as to the method and place of death of each apostle. Since the titles disciple and apostle are used interchangeably, it is important to define the words. (Disciple-refers to student learners) (Apostle-"*Shaliah*"-sent out. " Shaliah" was the name given to agents sent out into the community by the Sanhedrin with full rights sanctioned by this council of Israel) First the disciples were students as they journeyed around with Jesus observing his behavior and listening to his messages as he taught, restored sight to the blind, healed the sick, and raised the dead. Then, after he deemed them ready, he turned them into apostles and sent them out. Using this method of training, Jesus was sending a clear message to the people that the disciples were his delegates. This would enable them to carry on his work after he had returned to the Father.

As you view the chart below of the apostles, it is the writer's intent to not try and focus on the physical appearance or deeds of any particular disciple. As chapters unfold in this collection describing happenings in the ministry of Jesus, it will be important to recall that, even though other people were present, the training of his disciples was always his goal. Although many people would believe and come to Christ, the kingdom message must be propelled from generation to generation through the unified group of twelve apostles.

Above all, it is imperative for the reader or listener of this collection to center on the fact that the disciples were simply ordinary men that God used in an extraordinary manner. In viewing

the group of 12, you will recognize that Jesus used a broad stroke as he selected people from all walks of life; fishermen, a tax collector who worked for the Roman Empire and was thought of as cruel and dishonest, a zealot that wanted to do away with the Roman government, quiet men who stayed in the background not desirous of recognition, and a noisy, exuberant, excitable, enthusiastic individual like Peter the rock; people just like us. He covered all bases in dealing with the various personalities of mankind who would hear his message.

In addition, as the writer researched and prayed to God for direction, it became crystal clear that he would want the focus to be on the training, not the individual disciples. Had he wanted us to learn about each one, the writers of the Gospels would have supplied ample information.

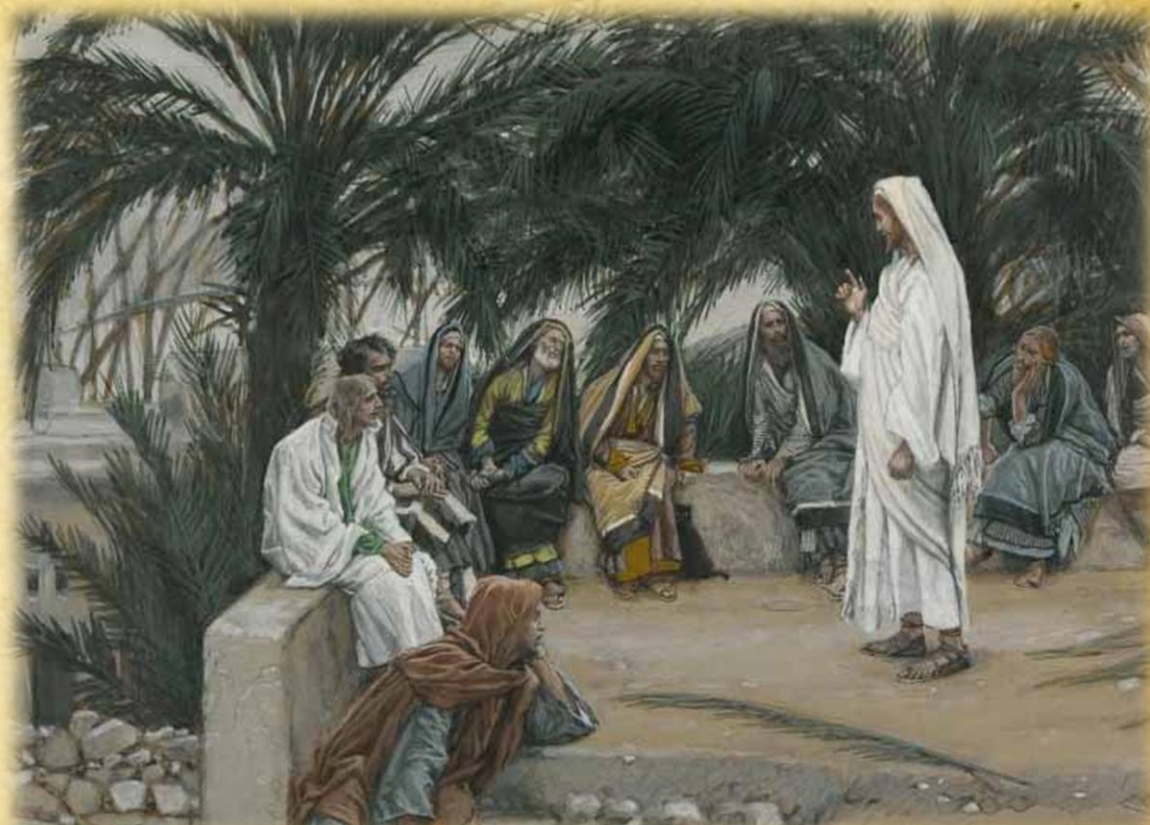


Ordination of the 12 disciples painting by Tissot

Those “whom he also named apostles” were:

<u>Gospel of Matthew</u> ^[Mt 10:1-4]	<u>Gospel of Mark</u> ^[Mk 3:13-19]	<u>Gospel of Luke</u> ^[Lk 6:12-16]	<u>Gospel of John</u>
<u>Simon</u> (“who is called Peter”)	Simon (“to whom he gave the name Peter”)	Simon (“whom he named Peter”)	Simon Peter / <u>Cephas</u>
<u>Andrew</u> (“his [Peter’s] brother”)	Andrew	Andrew (“his brother”)	Andrew (“brother of Simon Peter”)
<u>James</u> (“son of <u>Zebedee</u> ”)	James (“son of Zebedee”) / one of the “ <u>Boanerges</u> ”	James	one of the “sons of Zebedee”
<u>John</u> (“his [James’s] brother”)	John (“brother of James”) / one of the “Boanerges”	John	one of the “sons of Zebedee” / thought to be the “disciple whom Jesus loved” ^{[13:23][20:2]}
<u>Philip</u>	Philip	Philip	Philip
<u>Bartholomew</u>	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	<u>Nathanael</u>
<u>Thomas</u>	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas (“also called <u>Didymus</u> ”) ^{[11:16][20:24][21:2]}
<u>Matthew</u> (“the tax collector”)	Matthew	Matthew	not mentioned
<u>James</u> (“son of <u>Alphaeus</u> ”)	James (“son of Alphaeus”)	James (“son of Alphaeus”)	not mentioned
<u>Thaddaeus</u>	Thaddaeus	<u>Jude</u> (“son of James”)	Jude (“not Iscariot”) ^[14:22]
<u>Simon</u> (“the <u>Cananean</u> ”)	Simon (“the Cananean”)	Simon (“who was called the <u>Zealot</u> ”)	not mentioned
<u>Judas Iscariot</u>	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas (“son of Simon Iscar

Jesus teaches his disciples painting by Tissot





The disciples are now sent out as apostles of Christ by Tissot

TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION

Throughout the time the writer focused on this chapter, the words, “GO YE”, kept entering her mind. Thus, as a result of this occurring repeatedly, it is the writer’s belief that Jesus wanted all of us to conclude that we recognize the importance of our work as disciples in today’s world. After you have read the Scripture from the chart above, you will quickly recognize your reflection in the eyes of a particular disciple’s personality. If you are quiet and work in the background, you may identify with Andrew. If you are gregarious and quick to react, Peter’s eyes may hold your reflection. In the event you are mathematically inclined, Matthew may be your guy. Above all else, please always remember how important your work in the kingdom is to our Lord. Just like the disciples, you will sin and fall short, make enormous mistakes, feel afraid, act in a cowardly manner or hide, but still when all is said and done, compassion, courage, grace, and forgiveness from God will propel you forward.

In conclusion, if we witness a disciple struggling and in need of a helping hand, let us not become judgmental as messengers of Jesus, but encouraging, lacking hesitation, and filled with love. “GO YE!”

Sources:

“Twelve Ordinary Men by John MacArthur

“The Training Of The Disciples by A. B. Bruce

The Jew Named Jesus by Rebekah Simon-Peter

Education Among The Jews by Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph.D.



GROWING IN THE WORD



- 1) Suggested Hymn: Using devotionalembbers.com, open the hymnal and begin your time together by playing, “Only Trust Him,” by organist Brad Jent.
- 2) Using the chart above listing information about the disciples, spend some time locating the Scripture that tells about each disciple. Discuss the wide array of personalities Jesus chose. Relate it to today. Why is it important for disciples to have unique personalities and gifts when serving Christ?
- 3) When you read the section about the manner in which Jesus chose his disciples in relationship to the structure used by the religious community, why do you feel he took that approach? When

employers hire their staff, do you feel they are looking for the same values in people that Jesus recognized?

4) Why is it important to keep in mind that Jesus loved even the leaders that persecuted him relentlessly?

5) Which disciple can you relate to the most? Why?

6) Why do you think Jesus chose such a diverse group of individuals as his disciples?

7) What challenges might their individuality have presented with the bonding process?

8) Can you relate to being on a committee and having to learn to cope with the variety of personalities involved?

PRAYER

Dear Father,

Thank you for allowing us to see the uniqueness of each disciple you chose. The ordinariness of this group of men gives each of us great faith in our own abilities. If you chose to select 12 rag-tag individuals that did not hold prominent positions in society, then there is hope for all of us, too. It speaks loudly to the fact that each one of us is important in the work of the kingdom.

As we travel with you and your disciples in the remaining chapters, we ask for the wisdom to understand not only your teachings, but how difficult it was for the group of 12 to grasp the concepts; even though they were seeing you up close and personal. Please remind us that the information we possess is from a historical point of view. At this point on our journey in this collection we are witnessing the creation of the lessons in the Bible from which we obtain our knowledge.

Finally, help us internalize the importance of appreciating the uniqueness of each child you created. As we work as disciples in your kingdom, instill in our hearts attitudes of forgiveness, kindness, patience, and grace so that we may serve as one united body; your church. All these things we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen!