

Lesson 12 – The Twelve Apostles

Text: Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16

Main Characters: God, Jesus, the twelve apostles (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon, Judas Iscariot)

Key Passages:

- Luke 6:12 – Jesus went up on a mountain to pray all night before appointing the apostles
- Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13 – These are the lists of the twelve apostles.

Main Storyline:

As Jesus' ministry began to grow and mature, he decided to choose twelve men, known as apostles, who would eventually carry on his work. Before appointing the twelve apostles, he spent all night in prayer to God on a mountain. Considering the magnitude of his decision, and the impact that these men would eventually have in saving souls across the world, it was only fitting that Jesus spend the time that he did praying to God, the Father.

After his night of prayer, Jesus called the disciples to himself. From the disciples, he chose twelve men to be apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas Iscariot, who would eventually betray Jesus. These men were sent out (note that the word "apostle" means "one sent") to preach about the kingdom of heaven. They would have the ability to heal sicknesses and cast out demons (for the purpose of confirming that they were sent by God).

The apostles were a very special group of men. They would all, with the exception of Judas, witness the entire ministry of Jesus, from his baptism by John to his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:21-22). As a result of this, they had unique knowledge to share with the entire world. In addition, these men would eventually be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), which would help them to carry out their ultimate mission of sharing the good news of Jesus with the world. There would eventually be at least two additional apostles: Matthias, called to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26), and Paul, called later by Jesus, himself (Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 1:1).

The apostles were a very diverse group, and this may have very well been intended by Christ, considering their ultimate mission. To name just a few differences, some were fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, and John, at least), Matthew was a tax collector (hated by the Jews and seen as an instrument of the Roman oppression), Simon was likely a passionate Jewish nationalist (typical of a "zealot"), James and John were called "Sons of Thunder" (perhaps referring to their personalities), and Judas Iscariot would ultimately selfishly betray Jesus. Despite their diversity, these men shared a common goal in that they would together eventually be sent out to preach the good news of Jesus to the entire world. The differences between these men would not prevent them from carrying out their unique shared purpose.

The institution of the apostleship died with the original apostles. Once the apostles died, again, excepting Judas, there was no effort to replace them. This concept is further supported by Paul's description of himself in 1 Corinthians 15:8, which seems to imply that he was made an apostle as an exception ("out of due season"). There is no evidence of any apostolic succession after the establishment of the church.

While it is impossible to know Jesus' exact reasoning, his possible reasons for selecting twelve apostles has often been discussed. The most commonly accepted reason is that, in the Bible, the number twelve, as the number seven, is often associated with completeness or perfection (particularly within the book of Revelation). Particularly, many would relate the number of the apostles to the number of the tribes of Israel (also twelve).

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) We ought to pray fervently to God particularly before an important decision or moment in our lives.
- 2.) Diversity amongst God's people is a blessing; we all have different talents and abilities. We must learn to appreciate one another's abilities and utilize our own unique talents for the good of all.
- 3.) The institution of the apostleship died with the original apostles.