



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Chosen by the Master (Luke 6:12-16)

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Upon completion of the previous conflict accounts, we found Jesus repeatedly confronted by a growing hostility of the religious establishment to his ministry. It finally became clear to them that something must be done with this Jesus. Luke places the calling of the Twelve as the transition from conflict to teaching. As we recall from the beginning of this Gospel, Luke's purpose is to write an orderly account, so that we may have confidence in what we believe. With this in mind, we find that author emphasizing the place of these chosen men in the course of redemptive history. He also contrasts their selection with the rejection of Messiah by the religious leaders. The apostle Paul says that God's people and the members of his household are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets (Ephesian 2:20). We find this revealed through Luke's account in this gospel and further elaborated in his second volume - the Acts of the Apostles. Luke lays out for us the circumstances surrounding the calling of the apostles, the process through which Jesus makes his final decision, the men whom he chose to establish the church, and the mission they were given. There is much in this account that is historic, foundational, and unique to the establishing of these men as the pillars of the church. However, it would also be a mistake on our part to miss Jesus' pattern of developing workers who are equipped for the mission of advancing God's kingdom.

Luke 6:12-16 - (12) In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. (13) And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: (14) Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, (15) and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, (16) and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT

In these days – We find the emphasis of Luke's narrative upon the growing opposition that surrounded Jesus and his ministry. The religious leaders take a special interest in examining him. They became aware of this new miracle worker when the leper Jesus heals is commanded by him to go to the Temple and present himself to the priest as required by the law. Many travelled a great distance to hear his teachings at a home in Capernaum and are stunned by his audacious claim of authority when Jesus declared the paralytic's sins forgiven. He then validates this claim by restoring the paralytic's ability to walk in their presence. We find the religious leaders questioning why he is eating with tax collectors and sinners; they challenge him when his disciple pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath, and spy on him in the hope of catching him healing on the Sabbath. Jesus had come to declare the year of the Lord's favor, to proclaim freedom to the captives, good news to the poor, and liberty to those who were oppressed. This was

the work of Messiah and this was the work that Jesus was doing in plain view of the religious establishment of Judaism. Their conclusion to all that they examined, being eye witnesses to the miracles and teaching of the Son of God, was this, "they were filled with fury and discussed what they might do with Jesus." The antagonism had grown to the point of rejecting Jesus and in doing so; they reject their promised Messiah.

It is "these days" that Luke is referencing. The days when the hostility against Jesus had grown to a fevered pitch so that he understood that his time was short. It would be just two years before he was hung on the cross, raised from the dead, ascended to be with his Father, and his ministry would be given to his men. In realizing that his time was short for this earth, the moment had arrived to begin the focused training of those who would carry on his earthly ministry after his departure. The seeds of hostility have been firmly planted in the hearts of the religious leaders of Israel and Jesus turns his attention from the religious establishment to the calling of the Twelve, his apostles, these chosen envoys on which the foundation of the church would be laid.

He went out to the mountain to pray – This pattern of retreating in prayer has been seen often in this gospel. We find him here in the midst of a critical moment of his ministry and feeling the heat of his impending death he goes to God in prayer. He understands his time is drawing to an end and he must choose those who would carry on his earthly work. It is at the apex of this hostility that Jesus withdraws to the mountain in the full expression of his humanity to bring this need to God. For Jesus had set aside the independent use of his attributes. In prayer he submits himself to what God would have him do in this situation. He goes to God and through prayer he selects those through whom his work would continue.

And all night he continued in prayer – The thought of common, ordinary, and flawed men to be given the responsibility to carry on the work of Jesus should be staggering to us. Is it any wonder Jesus spends all night in prayer before this momentous occasion? This phrase "all night he continued in prayer" is a single word in the Greek text. It is *dianukterouon* which means to continue or endure through the night. This is a rare medical term and is used only once, on this occasion in the entire NT¹. The author appears to use this term to express the exerting of some effort through a nightlong vigil of struggle and submission. While the pattern of prayer in Jesus' life has been shown; this is the only recorded occurrence of him engaging in prayer that lasted until daybreak. As the storms of conflict swirl around Jesus, he seeks out God and maintains this communion all night long. Through

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prayer he chooses those who would become his special envoys, those who would represent him through word and deed.

CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE

He called his disciples— We find there is a larger group of disciples and from them Jesus chose twelve whom he would train and grant special access and insight into his ministry. Let us first consider the word disciple. In Greek it is the word *mathetes* which meant one who was a student of a specific teacher or rabbi. They are different from the crowds who came to hear Jesus and be healed by him. They may have initially started that way, but over time they became those who sought to learn from their teacher Jesus and apply his teaching to their life. We have already been introduced to Peter, James, John and Matthew who were disciples of Jesus and had given up business ventures to follow him. It is hard to estimate how many disciples Jesus would have had following him, or whether the group would grow or shrink in size as they travelled. Yet what we see from this account is that Jesus does not travel far in order to call his disciples to him at the dawn of the day. He finishes praying and while still on the mountain, he gathers the disciples together to choose those who have been divinely appointed to this task.

Chose from them twelve — From a large group he chose those who would receive his time and training to become his authorized representatives. Yet there is no escaping the fact that he chose twelve men. This fact is pregnant with symbolism especially as we consider the season in which this decision was made. At the height of opposition from the religious leaders, Jesus goes up to the mountain to secure the foundation on which God's kingdom would be established. As noted earlier, the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, not the scribes and Pharisees. They responded to Jesus with misapprehension and anger. The choosing of the twelve signals a judgment on Israel's leadership for their lack of insight into God's redemptive plan.² Make no mistake; the choosing of twelve signaled judgment against a nation whose religious establishment had rejected Messiah. Jesus was establishing the new order, a new creation through the appointing of these men to be pillars on which the Israel of God would be born.

Whom he named apostles — At this point in Luke's narrative, he gives us no insight into the purpose and responsibility of this spiritual office. We learn from the Gospel of Mark that Jesus called his apostles to be with him, to send them out to preach, and to cast out demons (Mark 3:14). These chosen men are called for a distinct purpose at a specific moment in time to establish the church upon which hell's gates cannot prevent its advance. These men, their teaching and their gifting are significant on the basis of

their proximity to Jesus at a watershed moment in history. Much in the same way was John the Baptizer the great prophet because of his role as the forerunner to Jesus (Luke 7:28). While their role, authority, and power are unique to the twelve, how Jesus transformed these common men should not be unique for the Christ follower in our day.

COMMON MEN, DIVERSE MEN

Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John. - As we consider the men Jesus' chose to be the pillars of the church we find that a single religious leader was not selected. There was not a Pharisee, or scribe, no Sadducee or priest. No one of prominence made the list; quite to the contrary, these are common men. There were not the social elites from Judea or Jerusalem, but fishermen and other commoners who were from Galilee. Jesus did not choose these men because they were qualified for the task. He chose them to demonstrate to the world and all future generations what God can do through common individuals who devote themselves to Jesus.

Matthew... and Simon who was called the Zealot — While these were common men having all come from the rural parts of Israel, we also are made aware of their diversity. We find Matthew who was a tax collector; the most hated profession in all of Israel due to the fact that he extorted money from his own countrymen to pay Rome, an oppressive invader. Then there is Simon the Zealot who belonged to a group committed to terrorist activity against all Roman oppression. How foolish to include these two men in the same group from a human perspective, and yet God uses the foolish to shame the wise so that in the end, he will receive the glory.

APPLICATION:

Jesus' training method for these men was life together, "to be with him." They heard him teach; they were given insight into parables, they asked questions, and were challenged for their lack of faith. We often seek to follow Jesus' pattern in prayer, how he deal with conflict, how he loved, and sacrificed. It is time to learn from Jesus how he transformed common and ordinary men, to become faithful, bold, and courageous men who turned the world upside-down.

1 – Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887). Lk 6:12–16.

2 – Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997). 258.