

The Twelve Apostles

Lesson 12

Study Notes

Review & The Apostle Paul

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Text: I Corinthians 15:1-10.

Introduction: I want us to review a few of the things we have learned so far about these men that the Lord chose to give the world the gospel message of salvation. We should be thankful for their willingness and faithfulness to obey the calling they received from the Master.

Andrew: The Apostle Who Shared Christ Personally.

He was the first of all the disciples to be called (John 1:35-40.)

Lessons we can learn from Andrew: (World's Bible Handbook)

- 1. He was hungry for the truth. John 1:35,36.*
- 2. He forsook all to follow Christ. John 1:37. Mark 1:16-18.*
- 3. He sought the deeper things of God. John 1:38 Mark 13:3,4.*
- 4. He brought his brother Peter to Christ. John 1:40-42.*
- 5. He attended church. Mark 1:29a.*
- 6. He was a family man. Mark 1:29b.*
- 7. He took notice of the little things, which resulted in the feeding of the 5000. John 6:8,9.*
- 8. He was interested in the unsaved. John 12:20-22. (Greeks who would see Jesus)*
- 9. He was a man of obedience and prayer. Acts 1:4, 12-14. (the upper room)*

Bartholomew: The Apostle Conspicuous for His Transparency.

He is also known as Nathaniel in Scripture.

From Scripture we do learn something of the character of Bartholomew in his thoughts about what came out of Nazareth. **John 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Phillip saith unto him, Come and see.** Nazareth was a rough town. Its culture was largely unrefined and uneducated. (It is still much the same today.)

Nathanael's prejudice against Nazareth, so unexpected in one so meek and amiable, sprung not from pride, as in the case of the people of Judaea, who despised the Galileans in general, but from humility. He was a Galilean himself, and as much an object of Jewish contempt as were the Nazarenes. His inward thought was, Surely the Messiah can never come from among a poor despised people such as we are - from Nazareth, or any other Galilean town or village?

James, The Son of Alphaeus.

He is also known as James the Less.

He is the ninth name in Luke's list of the Apostles (Luke 6:14-16). The only thing Scriptures tells us about this man is his name. If he ever wrote anything, it is lost to history. If he ever asked Jesus any questions or did anything to stand out from the group, Scripture does on record it. He never attained any degree of fame or notoriety. He was not the kind of person who stands out. He was utterly obscure. He even had a common name.

James, The Son of Zebedee.

Of the three disciples in Jesus' closet inner circle, James is the least familiar to us. The Bible gives us very little information about the details of his life and character. He is always paired with his younger brother John and the only time he stands alone is when he is martyrdom is recorded. He is the only one other than Judas Iscariot that we have any details of how he died.

John: The Apostle Who Personified Love.

John is the younger son of Zebedee and brother of James. He is part of the inner circle of Jesus' ministry and usually always mentioned with one of the other Apostles when named. He is familiar to us because he wrote so much of the New Testament. He gave us the Gospel account three Epistles and the Book of the Revelation. Aside from Luke and the Apostle Paul, John wrote more of the New Testament than any other human author.

John has often been nicknamed "the apostle of love" he wrote more than any other New Testament author about the importance of love, laying particular stress on the Christian's love for Christ, Christ's love for his church, and the love for one another that is supposed to be the hallmark of true believers.

Judas Iscariot: The Apostle Who Committed Suicide.

Judas is the most notorious and universally scorned of all the disciples, he was the betrayer. His name appears last in every biblical list of apostles, except for the list in Acts 1, where it doesn't appear at all. Every time Judas is mentioned in Scripture, we also find a notation about his being a traitor. It can be said of Judas, that he committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual, ever. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money.

Matthew: The Apostle Who Wrote a Great Gospel.

We note that Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi, and so that is his given Hebrew name, but by Matthew's own account he calls himself Matthew. By this we learn that men saw him as Levi, but after his surrender to Christ he saw himself as a changed man by the name of Matthew.

As noted in our earlier studies we believe him to be a brother to James the Less. Both men are referred to as the sons of Alphaeus.

In all likelihood, none of the Twelve was more notorious as a sinner than Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector—a publican—when Jesus called him. Tax collectors were the most despised people in Israel. They were hated and vilified by all of Jewish society.

Peter: The Apostle Who Was Hot-Hearted.

He is always listed first when the disciples are named. Peter stands out as the leader and spokesman for the whole company of the twelve.

Jesus saw in Peter "a man of large ascending ambition, which if given proper objectives would carry him far" -a man who would not rest at the beginning but who would go on unto perfection. True, Peter had his faults, for he was intensely human, but failures and triumphs were but stepping stones by which he reached higher heights. (Lockyer)

Philip: The Apostle Who Was Slow-Witted.

Philip is the first we read of the apostles that Jesus himself actually sought and found and said to him "Follow Me" we know that Andrew, Peter, and likely James came to Jesus because of the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness. We often hear the expression "I found the Lord" and others say "the Lord found me" in reality they are both right; for it is the Lord who puts the desire in our hearts both to seek him and the joy of being found by Him. It is always God who moves in our direction first. Here we see the classic tension between sovereign election and human choice. Philip's call is a perfect illustration of how both exist in perfect harmony. The Lord found Philip, but Philip felt he found the Lord. Both things were true from the human perspective. But from the biblical perspective, we know that God's choice is the determinative one.

Thaddaeus: The Apostle with Three Names.

His names are Judas, Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus.

All we are told about this apostle apart from his three names is that one day he asked Jesus a brief question:

John 14:22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Thomas: The Pessimist.

Most of us often refer to Thomas as "doubting Thomas" because of his absence at the first appearance of Christ to his disciples; and his statement to their excitement was that he would not believe unless he could see the nail prints in his hands and thrust his hand into the Lord's side. I think it would fairer to say of Thomas that he was devoted more so than a doubter.

Paul: The Apostle Extraordinary.

1Timothy 1:15,16 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

It is interesting to note that Paul states that he was a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

If, as "the chief of sinners," Paul had been graciously saved by the Redeemer, then there is hope for any other sinner willing to repent and believe. To all sinners, Paul was a pattern of the Lord's patient waiting to emancipate any sinner from the shackles of sin. In this age of grace, none need despair of finding mercy if God could save a man like Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor and blasphemer.

A small man, feeble, plain, nearsighted, and early in life bald-headed. An account in the apocryphal second-century Acts of Paul says, "He was a man of little stature, partly bald, with crooked legs, of vigorous physique, with eyes set close together and nose somewhat hooked." His enemies said that "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible"

1. A Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia (Acts 21:39). 2. A free-born Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). 3. A Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). 4. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5) 5. A pupil of Gamaliel, taught according to the perfect law of the Fathers (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14). 6. A student of Greek, as well as Jewish literature (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). 7. A man with a changed name (Acts 13:9).

Paul is thus distinguished from the rest of the apostles as a man of learning and culture, and pre-eminently designed and fitted by birth, education and earlier experiences to fill the peculiar place in the establishment, extension, and edification of the Church.

Paul is first mentioned in the New Testament as a young man about thirty years of age at whose feet the witnesses laid their garments on the stoning of Stephen, and who was therefore consenting to that martyr's death (Acts 7:58-60; 22:20).

Acts 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Acts 22:19,20. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

The account of Paul's conversion;

Acts 9:1-6 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Paul a missionary to the Gentiles.

The influence of Paul's three great missionary expeditions upon the history of mankind cannot be over-estimated. The time covered in these tours was about ten years, and the distance covered about 8,100 miles insignificant in these days as jet planes unite continents, but remarkable in those days when they had no planes, cars, trains, or fast-going sea vessels. The apostle continued laboring thus for some thirty

years, till, as is generally believed, he was beheaded by order of Nero at Rome, about A.D. 66. This world's greatest missionary was at home over all the then known Roman world.

Paul was a prisoner of the Lord.

A particular aspect of Paul's sufferings for the Master was that of his prison experiences. In his unconverted days when he made havoc of the church, and forced his way into the homes of saints, he took men and women and committed them to prison (Acts 8:3; 26:10). But he came to reap what he had sown - yet never thought of himself as a prisoner of any authority, always as a "prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Paul as a Preacher.

After his startling conversion as a preacher - "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9: 20). The last glimpse Luke gives us is the same, for the last verse of the Acts reads, "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (28: 31). There is no benediction to the Acts for by his life, labor, and literature Paul is still preaching. As we know, Paul's epistles are saturated with the term "preach" and its cognates. "Preach the Word"; "Preach Christ and him crucified"; "Preach the Gospel"; "Preach the faith" are some of the apostle's keynotes for present day preachers. Love for Christ and for the souls of men became Paul's supreme passion and directed his whole being (II Cor. 5: 14), so that he became a herald controlled by Christ, with one supreme passion to preach Him to the nations (1 Cor. 9:16).

Paul as a writer.

An impressive feature of the New Testament is that out of the twenty-seven Books composing it, fourteen if we include Hebrews- came from the brilliant mind, and Spirit-inspired pen of the Apostle Paul.

Conclusion: How manifold are the lessons we can learn from the witness and writings of this intrepid, happy warrior who fought such a good fight for the Captain of his salvation. A characteristic of the apostle worthy of emulation is the spirit of love which he manifested even when bitterly persecuted by his countrymen. Wherever he went, his conduct testified to the sincerity of his declaration that he bore no animosity against the severest ill-treatment from the Jews. His conscience bore witness in the Holy Spirit that his heart was heavy with grief over their hatred, and that he wished himself accursed from Christ for their sake (Rom. 9: 1-3). On every occasion of the rejection of his testimony by his own kinsmen, he took the opportunity of overcoming their evil with good, by entering their synagogues to instruct them (Acts 13:4,5; 14:1,19; 17:1,2,10).