

Sunday Evening, March 11, 2007 Notes:

Order of events:

1. Opening prayer.
2. Praise God with song.
3. Praise God with corporate prayer.
4. Praise God with study of His Word.
5. Close with blessing and reminder of the Gospel.

Precursor – We need to read these verses with two significant ideas in mind:

1. God the Father draws us to God the Son (Jesus). (Jer 31:3; John 15:16; 6:37,44,65)
2. God (Jesus) knows our hearts. (Psa 44:21; Jer 12:3; 17:9; Mark 2:8; John 2:24,25) He knows us better than we know ourselves. (2 Kin 19:27; Psa 139:2; Prov 20:24)

Read John 1:35-51 – Discuss the overall flow of events. So, John the Apostle has now introduced Jesus, the God-Man, the next logical step is to explain how they all met. And this is that story.

From John MacArthur's *Twelve Ordinary Men*:

I have always been fascinated with the lives of the twelve apostles. Who isn't? The personality types of these men are familiar to us. They are just like us, and they are like other people we know. They are approachable. They are real and living characters we can identify with. Their faults and foibles, as well as their triumphs and endearing features, are chronicled in some of the most fascinating accounts of the Bible. These are men we want to know.

That's because they were perfectly ordinary men in every way. Not one of them was renowned for scholarship or great erudition. They had no track record as orators or theologians. In fact, they were outsiders as far as the religious establishment of Jesus' day was concerned. They were not outstanding because of any natural talents or intellectual abilities. On the contrary, they were all too prone to mistakes, misstatements, wrong attitudes, lapses of faith, and bitter failure - no one more so than the leader of the group, Peter. Even Jesus remarked that they were slow learners and somewhat spiritually dense (Luke 24:25).

They spanned the political spectrum. One was a former Zealot - a radical, determined to overthrow Roman rule. But another had been a tax collector - virtually a traitor to the Jewish nation and in collusion with Rome. At least four, and possibly seven, were fishermen and close friends from Capernaum, probably having known one another from childhood. The others must have been tradesmen or craftsmen, but we are not told what they did before becoming followers of Christ. Most of them were from Galilee, an agricultural region at the intersection of trade routes. And Galilee remained their home base for most of Jesus' ministry - not (as some might think) Jerusalem in Judea, which was the political and religious capital of Israel.

Yet with all their faults and character flaws - as remarkably ordinary as they were - these men carried on a ministry after Jesus' ascension that left an indelible impact on the world. Their ministry continues to influence us even today. God graciously empowered and used these men to inaugurate the spread of the gospel message and to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Ordinary men - people like you and me - became the instruments by which Christ's message was carried to the ends of the earth. No wonder they are such fascinating characters.

The Twelve were personally selected and called by Christ. He knew them as only their Creator could know them (cf. John 1:47). In other words, He knew all their faults long before He chose them. He even knew Judas would betray Him (John 6:70; 13:21-27), and yet He chose the traitor anyway and gave him all the same privileges and blessings He gave to the others.

Think about the ramifications of this: From our human perspective, the propagation of the gospel and the founding of the church hinged entirely on twelve men whose most outstanding characteristic was their ordinariness. They were chosen by Christ and trained for a time that is best measured in months, not years. He taught them the Scriptures and theology. He disciplined them in the ways of godly living (teaching them and showing them how to pray, how to forgive, and how to serve one another with humility). He gave them moral instruction. He spoke to them of things to come. And He employed them as His instruments to heal the sick, cast out demons, and do other miraculous works. Three of them - Peter, James, and John - even got a brief glimpse of Him in His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9).

It was a brief but intensive schedule of discipleship. And when it was over, on the night of Jesus' betrayal, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matthew 26:56). From an earthly point of view, the training program looked like a monumental failure. It seemed the disciples had forgotten or ignored everything Christ had ever taught them about taking up the cross and following Him. In fact, their own sense of failure was so profound that they went back to their old vocations for a time. And even at that, it appeared they would fail (John 21:3-4).

But encouraged by the risen Lord, they returned to their apostolic calling. Empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they valiantly undertook the task to which Jesus had called them. The work they subsequently began continues today, two thousand years later. They are living proof that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. In and of themselves they were clearly not sufficient for the task (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:16). But God led them in triumph in Christ, and through them He diffused "the fragrance of His knowledge in every place" (v. 14).

To get an appreciation for the brevity of their earthly time with Christ, consider the fact that Jesus' entire ministry from baptism to resurrection lasted only about three years. And the intensive training time with the disciples was only about half that long. In A. B. Bruce's classic work, *The Training of the Twelve*, he points out that by the time Jesus identified and called the Twelve from the larger group of His followers (Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16), half of his earthly ministry was already over: That means these few men, whose backgrounds were in mundane trades and earthly occupations, had little more than eighteen months' training for the monumental task to which they were called. There was no second string, no backup players, no plan B if the Twelve should fail.

The strategy sounds risky in the extreme. In earthly terms, the founding of the church and the spread of the gospel message depended entirely on those twelve ordinary men with their many obvious weaknesses - and one of them so devilish as to betray the Lord of the universe. And the entirety of their training for the task took less than half as long as it typically takes to get a degree from a seminary today.

But Christ knew what He was doing. From His divine perspective, the ultimate success of the strategy actually depended on the Holy Spirit working in those men to accomplish His sovereign will. It was a mission that could not be thwarted. That's why it was a work for which God alone deserves praise and glory. Those men were merely instruments in His hands - just as you and I can be God's instruments today. God delights to use such ordinary means - "the foolish things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). The two-thousand-year triumph of the apostolic endeavor is a testimony to the wisdom and power of the divine strategy.

Sometimes in Scripture the Twelve are called "disciples" - *mathetes* in the Greek text (Matthew 10:1; 11:1; 20:17; Luke 9:1). The word means "learners, students." That is what they were during those months they spent under the direct and personal tutelage of the Lord. He had multitudes of disciples, but these twelve were specifically called and chosen to a unique apostolic office. Therefore they are also designated "apostles" - *apostoloi* in the Greek. The word simply means "messengers, sent ones." They were given a unique ambassadorial office of authority and spokespersonship for Christ. Luke especially uses this term in his gospel and throughout the Book of Acts, and he reserves the term almost exclusively for the Twelve. Matthew speaks of "apostles" only once (Matthew 10:2); elsewhere, he refers to "twelve disciples" (11:1; 20:17) or "the twelve" (26:14,20,47). Likewise, Mark uses the term "apostles" only once (Mark 6:30). Other than that, he always refers to the apostles as "the twelve" (3:14; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43). John, too, uses the word *apostolos* just once, in a non-technical sense (John 13:16 - where most

English versions render the expression, “he who is sent”). Like Mark, John always refers to the apostolic band as “the twelve” (John 6:67,70-71; 20:24).

Luke 10 describes an incident where seventy of Jesus’ followers were chosen and sent out two by two. They were obviously “sent ones” and some commentators therefore refer to them as “apostles,” but Luke does not employ that term to describe them.

The Twelve were called to a specific office. And in the Gospels and Acts, the term *apostoloi* almost always refers to that office and the twelve men who were specifically called and ordained to the office. Acts 14:14 and the Pauline epistles make it clear that the apostle Paul was likewise called to fill a special apostolic office - that of “apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). Paul’s apostleship was a unique calling. He obviously had the same authority and privileges as that of the Twelve (2 Corinthians 11:5). But Paul’s apostleship is not subject matter for this book, because our focus here is on the twelve men who shared Jesus’ public ministry with Him as His closest friends and companions. Paul wasn’t converted until after Christ’s ascension (Acts 9). He was an apostle “born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). He spoke with the same authority and manifested the same miraculous ability as the Twelve - and the Twelve embraced him and recognized his authority (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16) - but he was not one of them.

The number twelve was significant, because Luke describes how, after Jesus’ ascension, the apostles chose Matthias to fill the office vacated by Judas (Acts 1:23-26).

The role of an apostle (including the special office to which the apostle Paul was called) involved a position of leadership and exclusive teaching authority in the early church. The New Testament Scriptures were all written by the apostles or their close associates. And before the New Testament was written, the apostles’ teaching was the rule in the early church. Beginning with the very first converts at Pentecost, all true believers looked to the apostles’ leadership (Acts 2:37). And as the church grew, its faithfulness to the truth was described in these terms: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

The apostles were given a supernatural power to work signs and wonders (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7, 13; Luke 9:1-2; Acts 2:3-4; 5:12). Those signs bore witness to the truth of the gospel, which the apostles had received from Christ, and which they introduced on His behalf to the world (2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4).

In other words, their role was a pivotal, foundational role. They are in a true sense, the very foundation of the Christian church, “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

These studies in the lives of the apostles have been a particular delight for me - and one of the most fruitful endeavors of my life. My greatest joy is preaching Christ. Eleven of these men shared that passion, devoted their lives to it, and triumphed in it against overwhelming opposition. They are fitting heroes and role models for us, despite their shortcomings. To study their lives is to get to know the men who were closest to Christ during His earthly life. To realize that they were ordinary people just like us is a great blessing. May the Spirit of Christ who taught them transform us the way He transformed them, into precious vessels fit for the Master’s use. And may we learn from their example what it means to be disciples indeed. [2]

One of the exciting things about studying Scripture is that you can ask yourself questions about it. What things in the passage really jump out to you? What questions are raised? What images are evoked? What seems odd? What is amazing? Discussion.

### **Some things that stand out to me:**

1. Why was John excited (and how can we tell) and why did he refer to Jesus as the “Lamb of God”? “I must decrease” – John 3:30. John’s remark really is designed to pique the disciples’ interest irresistibly – irresistible grace? The Greek here is an interjection; John was pushing his disciples out of the nest. John refers to Jesus as

Messiah, Son of God, Lamb of God, and Baptizer with the Holy Spirit. “Lamb of God” emphasizes the first step of dealing with our sin.

2. What a great question Jesus asks to get such a reserved answer! “What do you seek?” “Rabbi, where are you staying?” One, they never really answered the question. Two, when the Creator of the entire known universe asks you what you seek, don’t ask him where’s he’s living these days! These guys were coyly trying to follow Jesus and just observe (pre automobile tailgating days), and he busted them, and they stumbled.

3. What a great answer from Jesus. “Come and see.” Jesus: always full of grace. Here’s an invitation to intimidated or cautious folks to come and investigate – see for yourselves, come along. Andrew and the other disciple (John probably) were probably the cautious types. Andrew only appears a few more times in Scripture: quite silent. What a great message. We don’t have to do a lot of explaining to others, just invite them to “come and see.” They stayed the whole day with Jesus (starting at 10:00 am by RST – Roman Standard Time). What a great time they must have had. Looks like that same day, Andrew went to get his brother, Peter. (v.43) Andrew: the first evangelist. Based on the Greek grammar in v.41, it could be interpreted that Andrew first went to get his brother, and the other disciple (John) went to get his afterwards. James could have been recruited at this time as well. Andrew is sometimes known as “the apostle of little things.” [2] His eagerness to follow Christ and zeal to introduce others typifies his character. Andrew is always listed in the top 4 disciples and associated closely with Peter, James, and John; though, generally not in their activities. He seems the least contentious of the disciples. Whenever he acts or speaks in Scripture, he says and does the right thing. His legacy was that people who do “little things” are quite important.

4. So, who is this other unnamed disciple? Most scholars believe it was John. Ever careful not to mention himself in his own gospel, when an unknown character comes up, there’s always a likely suspect.

5. Messiah (which translated means the Christ). Messias à Messiah à Christos à Anointed One of God. Anytime you see the ending “iah” or “el”, the name or person of God is usually in the meaning of the name. Jeremiah (May Yahweh lift up), Bethel (house of God), Israel (contends with God). In the OT, the references to Christ are many, numerous, and varied: Anointed One, Chosen One, Messiah, Angel of the LORD, King of Israel, Son of God, Son of Man, Immanuel, etc., etc. Check out [http://www.bible-history.com/resource/r\\_mess.htm](http://www.bible-history.com/resource/r_mess.htm) for a list of several key prophecies.

6. Simon (Greek, Simeon - Hebrew) Cephas (Aramaic for rock) Peter (Petros – Greek for rock, stone) – the man of many names. Why did Jesus feel the need to change his name? Peter was sought, brought, and caught. He is the one disciple many of us can easily relate to. He suffered from “hoof in mouth” disease. Peter’s humanity comforts us. Simon means “flat nosed.” But it is Greek for Simeon, which means “listener.” “Listener” implies more of a follower. Jesus intended to let him know that he was going to be a foundational figure in this adventure – a leader. Simon the listener got turned into Peter the doer: the great proclaimer at Pentecost. So much can be added about Peter.

7. What were all these fisherman doing down in Judea, so far from home in Galilee? Galilee is about 70 miles north of here. Selling fish. Checking out John the Baptist. They probably all knew, if not knew of, each other.

8. Off to Galilee? Let’s walk to Payson from Mesa! No wonder we’re all snug in our clothes these days. “Next day,” John brings in the calendar again. Everyone was headed from the wilderness here in Judea back home to Galilee. It seems easiest to think of them as provinces or states: Judea, Samaria, Galilee.

9. Jesus found Philip. Why? Notice most of the others were brought by someone, but Jesus taps Philip directly himself. Even the lonely or forgotten or outcasts are not so with Christ. Very little is ever said about Philip ever in

the Scriptures. This is not Philip the evangelist in Acts; however, this Philip did excitedly go and round up Nathanael. “Come and see.” Philip appeals to Nathanael on the basis of Scripture and the Prophets. (Luke 24:27) Philip is a Greek name which means “lover of horses.” His Hebrew name is not mentioned in Scripture. Philip is listed usually as fifth in the line of apostles. He was probably the leader of the second group of four (Philip, Nathanael (Bartholomew), Thomas, Matthew (Levi)). He and Nathanael were likely close friends. He too seems knowledgeable of the Scriptures and even uses them as an appeal to Nate. It is interesting that a lot of these men knew each other and were friends prior to knowing Jesus. One would have thought Jesus would pick from a wider variety of people: not necessary. No details about Philip are found in the synoptics. MacArthur classifies Philip as completely different than the others. He was a “process person”: by the book: no imagination: no vision: a rule following fool; bureaucrat; killjoy; pessimist; cynic. A regular Eeyore if you will. As with the rest, he seems to have been listening to and following John the Baptist. Interesting note is that Jesus found Philip, but Philip relates to Nate, “We have found Him.” A classic example of the tension between sovereign election and human choice. [2] Both exist in perfect harmony. He was ready, expectant, and his heart was prepared for Jesus to come to him. Philip was not usually very decisive, but he was in this case. He is a prominent figure, for example, in the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000, where he seems indecisive and lacking faith. Philip was the administrator, arranging and planning meals and logistics. Unfortunately, Philip’s written history ends with the sad statement, “...show us the Father...” He still needed more proof, even after 3 years of intimacy. Fortunately, God uses the foolish and weak things to demonstrate his greatness. (1Cor 1:27-29) No boasting here.

10. What did Moses and the prophets write about Jesus? Some say there are over 300 prophecies point out Messiah in the OT. To see some of them, visit the prophecy link at [http://www.bible-history.com/resource/r\\_mess.htm](http://www.bible-history.com/resource/r_mess.htm).

11. Who is Nathanael (note the “el”)? Full name: Nathanael (“God has given”) Bartholomew (son of Tolmai: Bar-Tolmai) from Cana. Nate knew his scriptures, and knew that Messiah did not come from Nazareth but from Bethlehem. But his comment does show a great weakness that many of us have, prejudice – even if it’s in a town rivalry. He could have worded his response differently. Nathanael reminds us how dangerous prejudice can be; we could miss the Savior because of it. John Bunyan’s Ear-gate was guarded by old Mr. Prejudice to keep faith from being heard. [2] Jesus clearly demonstrates his knowledge of men, his omniscience, with the story of Nathanael. Only the book of John contains details about Nathanael: John 1 and 21. Obviously, Scripture was important to him. Studying under a fig tree was very common in those days.

12. Why did Jesus call Nathanael a “an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile”? Jesus read the purity and honesty in his heart. Nathanael was the genuine article: a true spiritual offspring of Abraham. His heart was circumcised. His faith was authentic. His devotion to God real. He was expectant of Messiah. Jesus knew what he was doing in his “private chamber.” Nathanael’s reaction to Jesus indicates this is true. Nathanael was transparent. When he recognized Jesus’ omniscience coupled with his knowledge of Scriptures, he could not help but to declare Jesus as the Son of God, Messiah, King of Israel.

13. Where are the other disciples and how do they fit in this picture? Some sources indicate that once this group returned to Galilee, that Jesus’ ministry didn’t take off, full steam, until about 1-1/2 years later, and then with the full compliment including these folks recalled to service.

14. Why did Jesus tell this great truth about Jacob’s ladder? Wherever we run into the phrase “Verily. Verily,” or “Truly. Truly,” we know a great truth is to follow. He coupled his revelation about Nathanael with the story of Jacob, the real “true” Israelite. Remember Jacob’s name was changed to Israel after his wrestling match with God (some say Jesus), and his original name Jacob means deceiver, heel grabber, or cheater: full of guile. This could be viewed as a parry of sorts, letting Nate know that Jesus indeed knew the Scriptures also and would love to discuss them with him (Luke 24:27). He affirmed Nate’s faith and let him know that he really hadn’t seen anything yet; this

was jus the beginning. What a tremendous truth Jesus reveals to them all through Nate: “I [Jesus] am the ladder that connects heaven and earth! I am the bridge you’ve been awaiting.”

### **Overarching observations and information:**

John seems to want to bring in time, the calendar, and geography. It seems that he wants to ensure that everyone knows the temporal nature to which God had been subjected in Christ (Phil 2).

Friendships seem to provide the most fertile soil for evangelism. It is often the first impulse of a new believer to invite family or friends to hear the same message.

We’ve discussed John and James, the “sons of Thunder,” extensively; here are some facts about the others mentioned tonight:

#### Notes on Peter (the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth):

Jesus gave Simon the nickname Peter to be a perpetual reminder of who he should be. Tommy Lasorda did the same thing with Orel Hershiser by nicknaming him “Bulldog:” the opposite of his nature. Peter was called Simon in reference to secular things such as his house or wife or occupation. He was referred to as Simon when he was acting in his old nature. John, who knew Peter very well, called him “Simon Peter.” Peter referred to himself as “Simon Peter.” The last time Jesus referred to Peter as Simon was in John 21 when he was asking if he love him. Peter was exactly like us – struggling with carnal and spiritual. Peter was crucified upside down. He was forced to watch his wife be crucified before him. He exhorted her to “Remember the Lord.”

#### Notes on Andrew (the apostle of small things):

Patron saint of Russia and Scotland (and the San Andreas Fault). Martyred at Patrae in Achaia on an X cross for converting the wife of a Roman provincial governor. For 2 days he hung upside down on the cross and exhorted people to follow Christ.

#### Notes on Philip (the bean counter):

Philip was stoned to death at Heliopolis in Phrygia (Asia Minor) eight years after the martyrdom of James. Before his death, multitudes came to Christ under his preaching.

#### Notes on Nathanael (the guileless one):

Ministered in Persia and India and possibly to Armenia. Tradition has two possible deaths: 1) tied up in a sack and cast in to the sea; 2) crucified. Definitely martyred like the rest. Faithful to the end because he was faithful at the start.

#### References:

1. Stedman, Ray C., *The Man Who Knew Men*, 1983
2. John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, 2002
3. Halley, Henry H., *Pocket Bible Handbook*, 1951
4. Guideposts, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986
5. Zondervan, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985
6. <http://www.geocities.com/ian4christ41/baptism.html> (Baptism in the Holy Spirit)

#### Some Answers to the questions:

1. The Bible is the Word of God and an accurate account of people, places, and events that took place in TIME. Jesus knew and taught that the Scriptures were true, even down to the smallest detail. He also confirmed the literal interpretation of EVERY person, place, and event. The Bible is not a Book to study for idle curiosity. It is the very Word of God and changes the lives of men and nations. Jesus died so that it might be possible to have the life of God breathed right into our souls. There is no greater pursuit in life than the pursuit of knowing God.