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7 Following the Messiah: Calling the Apostles Part 1

Opening:

1. You have viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 4 (the first half) at www.appianmedia.org and have worked through the study guide (Lesson Seven) available at www.appianmedia.org/free-download.
2. In the next two studies, this one and the one planned for Wednesday April 29, 2020, give attention to the Calling of the Apostles.

Into the Text:

1. The account of the calling of the apostles is contained in Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11; John 1:35-51.
2. One of the first things that strikes us as we consider these accounts is the seeming immediacy with which these dropped their nets and followed Jesus. It is as if they have just met Him and immediately drop everything and begin to follow Him. But perhaps we have made some false assumptions.

At least some of them had been disciples of John (John 1:35ff). Luke 6:12-15 tells how Jesus went off to the mountain to pray and after spending the whole night in prayer, called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles. In other words, these twelve were already among His disciples. It is not entirely clear on how long they had listened to His teaching and been exposed to His message before being chosen to serve in this special way.

Maybe their dropping their nets and following Him occurs after quite a lot of exposure to Him, to His teaching and their recognition that He is the Messiah. We need not assume that there is something mysterious about their commitment as we read our condensed version of what happened. Besides these are Galileans and Jesus has been in Galilee now for nearly 30 years. It is not likely that when they dropped their nets and followed Him that this was their first contact with Him.

2. In the worksheet it is observed that the twelve Jesus chose were "nobodies" and "common men." Certainly this is true from the world's perspective. Jesus did not choose from the wealthiest, the best educated and the most connected to be His apostles.

BUT then again, He did NOT choose a group of lazy, misdirected, profligates either. He chose men of honesty. Nathanael is described as a man, in whom, there was no deceit (Jn. 1:47). He chose men who worked (fishermen, tax-collectors). He chose men who were serious about their relationship with God. Some of them had been

followers of John. They were expecting God to intervene in the history of men by sending the Messiah and establishing His kingdom. They believed in what Moses and the Prophets said (Jn. 1:45) and they believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

To say that they were “nobodies” and “common men” does not mean that Jesus was not careful in choosing them. Lk. 6:12-14 says He prayed all night, then called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles.

George Will, the Pulitzer Prize winning columnist, wrote, “It’s extraordinary how extraordinary the ordinary person is.”

Jesus saw in these ordinary twelve extraordinary things. Their belief in Moses and the Prophets, their expectation of God’s intervention in the history of mankind, their anticipation of the kingdom, their willingness to learn, their commitment, all these things and more set them apart to do extraordinary things.

When the Lord considers your role in the kingdom what does He see? Mere tax-collectors and fishermen? Those caught up in the affairs of the world OR those who are able to “drop their nets” for a bigger catch?

3. What is the difference between a “disciple” and an “apostle”?

While the word “disciple” denotes one who is literally a “follower” it goes beyond being merely a student. A disciple was a student, but more, he was an adherent to the teacher and his teachings. Disciples became like their teacher. They adopted his perspective on the law of God, his interpretations, his application and disciplined their lives accordingly.

The word “apostle” literally means “one who is sent.” The twelve were sent on a mission to communicate about the King and His kingdom. While they were truly disciples they were a special group within the disciples. All apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles.

We learn more about what is meant by the term “apostle” in Acts 1. After the resurrection and before His ascension Jesus commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they would be given power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them. Later, they were in an upper room when Peter addressed the need to appoint someone to replace Judas, who had betrayed the Lord. Read verses 21-22.

Two qualifications stand out. 1) He must be one who accompanied us all the time that Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until He was taken up. 2) He must be a witness with us of His resurrection.

4. In the video you were taken to a Roman Road upon which Jesus and the apostles probably walked. How does that help you visualize the scenes of the first century?

5. When you see the first century boat, discovered in 1986, and imagine some of the scenes that occurred around the Sea of Galilee with Jesus and His apostles, how does it help you understand more about what happened there? Imagine yourself fishing all night from this boat and having caught nothing and Jesus says, "Cast the net on the other side of the boat."

6. Picture yourself in this boat. Jesus is asleep as you are crossing the Sea. A storm comes up and you are about to be drowned and He calms the sea. See Lk. 8:22-25.

7. He sends you across the Sea in this boat. You leave Him on the shore expecting that He will arrive sometime later after having walked around on the land or perhaps coming later on another boat. A storm comes up. It's already dark. You row three or four miles trying to get to Capernaum and you see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat. You are receiving Him into the boat and immediately the boat lands at Capernaum. See Jn. 6:16-21.

8. But it is really not about the incredible things, the miracles, that Jesus did. It is about WHO He is!!!! Fearful and amazed they asked one another, "Who is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" (Lk. 8:25).

Application:

1. What thoughts go through your mind when you consider these things?
2. What does "Following the Messiah" mean to you?
3. What are you going to do as a result of your belief in Him?