

PORTRAIT OF AN APOSTLE

Part ? of LUKE, Luke 6:12-16.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. August 22, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Today is part one of a two part study I've called Portrait of an Apostle.

I believe that you will find this teaching very interesting, very informative, very faith-building, and very encouraging. But you need to be here for both parts to feel the full impact.

We've arrived at a passage in Luke that describes the choosing of the twelve apostles. Today, we'll focus on Luke 6:12-16 and next time we'll look at a brief survey of the rest of the New Testament's information about the apostles of the church. In the end, we'll have developed a full portrait of these vitally important men and their ministry.

There are several important and practical reasons to know as much as we can about this group of men, and I'll get into those as we develop the portrait.

Let's begin by reading Luke 6:12-16.

LUKE 6:12-16

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

THE CONTEXT OF LUKE 6:12-16

We'll better understand what's going on here if we take a moment to outline its context.

Jesus is moving around the region of the Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, and casting out demons to show his Kingdom authority.

There are three results of Jesus' words and deeds:

- He is attracting larger and larger crowds and some people are following him as disciples or learners.
- He is showing himself to be the Messiah of Israel and, more than that, God with us, one proof of which is: He announced that he is the Lord of the Sabbath.
- He is clashing with the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They believe he is an impostor and a threat to their leadership, so they want to stop him and they are now plotting to kill him (Luke 6:11; Matthew 12:14).

Jesus sensed it was time to change his ministry focus from gathering crowds and disciples. With the crucifixion looming as inevitable, Jesus knows that he must prepare a small group of leaders to carry on his mission after he is gone.

However, Jesus is the obedient Son of the Father and he does nothing on his own (Matthew 12:17-18 - Jesus fulfills the passage in Isaiah, "my servant whom I have chosen"). Consequently, he withdraws from the crowds and spends the night in prayer, asking for the Father's guidance. This is a epochal moment and Jesus wants to choose the right men for the most important task in human history - the advance of the Gospel to the whole world..

When it was morning, he came down the mountain, met with his large group of disciples, and "chose twelve of them, whom he designated as apostles" (Luke 6:13).

That is the context. Now, let's develop our portrait of an apostle.

THE PORTRAIT OF AN APOSTLE

1. THE APOSTLES WERE ORDINARY PEOPLE. The Bible does not provide a great deal of biographical information about these twelve men, but we do know this: Jesus did not choose aristocrats, scholars, priests, or rabbis; nor anyone famous or powerful.

Jesus chose four fishermen, one tax collector, one greedy traitor, one resistance fighter (Zealot - zealous for the honor of God, cf Phinehas, Numbers 25:10-13), and five men we know almost nothing about. Later, the rulers of Israel noted that Peter and John were "unschooled, ordinary men" (Acts 4:13).

Jesus did not choose spiritual giants. When a storm blew up and the apostles panicked in the boat, Jesus asked them, (Mark 4:40) "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" When Jesus was arrested, they all ran away. They frequently misunderstood his teaching and were bull-headed, proud, and competitive (Mark 9:33-37).

God uses ordinary, flawed, people. It's calling, not credentials, that produces ministers of Christ. It's God's power that makes us effective, not the power that comes from wealth or status, degrees or talent, nor any other human factor. It was only after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost that the apostles became truly effective. Paul, who was appointed as an apostle of Christ many years after this, wrote about the source of his ministry effectiveness.

(2 Corinthians 3:5-6A) Not that we are competent (able, sufficient) in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but **our competence comes from God. 6A He has made us competent** as ministers of a new covenant ...

The apostles were ordinary men, but they received an extraordinary mission and a supernatural anointing to get it done. They laid the foundation for the church, which today is in every nation, with one billion people who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

Every true Christian is a Spirit empowered minister of Christ. Years ago, I heard a speaker tell a group of high school students, "Little is much when God is in it". We can't, but he can.

2. THE APOSTLES WERE THE NEW LEADERS OF ISRAEL. Sadly, in the time of Jesus, Israel's leaders were corrupt and unfit to lead God's people. In the prophetic words of Ezekiel, they were bad shepherds who abused God's flock.

(Ezekiel 34:1-2) The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?

(Ezekiel 34:10) This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock ...

(Ezekiel 34:15-16) I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.

Jesus came to gather and tend to God's flock. And he came to replace the corrupt leadership of Israel. When they rejected him as their King, he rejected them and replaced them with the twelve apostles.

Just as the twelve tribes represented God's people under the Old Covenant, so now the twelve apostles represent God's redeemed people under the New Covenant. At the end of time, the New Jerusalem (which is God's redeemed people from both eras; the bride of Christ, the Lamb) will come down out of heaven from God. On its twelve gates are written the names of the twelve tribes and on its foundations are written the "names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:1-4, 9-14).

God always has a people and a plan for the salvation of the world. Israel's leaders failed, but God never fails. Jesus and his apostles laid the foundations for today's church. The church is the continuation of God's people, called to continue Israel's global mission (see, for example, 1 Peter 2:1-10).

God never fails. His purpose will endure. His rescue plan will be fulfilled. Trust him.

3. THE APOSTLES WERE THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES OF JESUS. The word, apostle, means an official representative who is sent out with the message and delegated authority of the sender. In ancient Israel, the government had apostles who were sent out with authority to do government business. Prominent rabbis had apostles who were sent out with authority to teach or settle disputes among the rabbis' followers.

According to Mark 3, Jesus called the twelve apostles for three reasons:

(Mark 3:13-15) Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve 1) **that they might be with him** and that 2) **he might send them out to preach** 15 and 3) **to have authority to drive out demons.**

They were with him to watch, follow, listen and learn (for example, Luke 6:17-26, the teaching on the plateau). Then they were to go out and replicate Jesus's message and ministry (Luke 9:1-6). The apostles preached his Kingdom message, demonstrated his Kingdom authority, and advanced his Kingdom mission; first on a short mission in the area around the Galilee (Luke 9:1-6, 10) and then into all the world (Acts and Matthew 28:18-20).

Those are the insights we have time for this week. Be sure to return next Sunday for the rest. It's important to know what an apostle is because there is a lot of confusion among Christians and it has led to some serious problems in churches. We want to avoid those problems so that we can be effective in the mission God has given us.

Let's finish with an application drawn from what we've learned today.

CONCLUSION

BUILD YOUR LIFE ON THE APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION

Next week, we'll study Ephesians 2:20, a verse that describes the apostles as the foundation of the church and Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. The point is that faithful Christians build their lives on the person, work, and words of Jesus as they have been written down by his official representatives, the apostles, and passed on to us in the New Testament.

Another way to say that is, the New Testament is the supreme authority for the content and practice of the Christian faith; that is, what we are to believe and how we are to live. I want to state very clearly that faithful Christians must not build their lives on worldly concepts.

We are to build our lives on Christ and the teaching of his official representatives, the apostles. We're to construct our doctrine, our theology, our beliefs, our worldview on their foundational teachings. We're to live out our faith according to their instructions. We must never elevate our words and ideas above those of the apostles of Christ. They are the foundation.

None of that happens by accident, nor does it happen by osmosis. No, it happens on purpose when we are intentional about reading, understanding, and applying the Bible. It happens when we take the Bible seriously enough to evaluate everything by its standards. It happens when we are so Bible saturated that it influences our thinking, attitudes, and behavior.

Put your trust in Jesus Christ. Take your stand on the Word of God. Hold fast to the apostolic teaching. Amen!

WORSHIP CELEBRATION**Sunday, August 22, 2021****1:30 Welcome & Invocation-Peter**

Announce prayer ministers!

0:00 Prayer Brian**4:07 *God So Loved-Julia*****0:00 *Doxology-Brian*****0:45 Pray & Dismiss Kids- Peter****3:00 Bible Reading- Joe Sabo Rom 14:13-23****4:15 *Stronger-Brian*****25:00 Teaching-Peter****3:00 A.C.T.S. Prayer-Peter****0:00 communion-Peter****4:13 *Build My Life-julia*****1:30 Updates-Joey Peter****0:30 Blessing-Peter**
