

## **Mark: The Twelve**

**Mark 3:7-9**

**By [Dr. Derek Thomas](#)**

*March 28, 2004*

Turn with me to Mark chapter 3 and to verses 7 through 21, Mark 3:7-21. Before we read the Scripture together, let's come before God in prayer. Let us pray.

*Once again, O Lord, we bow in Your presence. We are a needy people. We were fed this morning but we're hungry again and it is our experience every week that we need Your word on a daily and hourly and a minute-by-minute basis. Without Your word we would not be able to discern our sins; we would not see Jesus. And so, Holy Spirit, as we read this gospel of Mark this evening which You caused to be written, we pray that You would grant an illumination in our minds and our hearts, in our spirits and souls. Teach us the grace of obedience to all that You teach us in this passage this evening, and may we be disciples. For Jesus' sake we ask it. Amen.*

Hear now, the word of God. Mark 3:7-21:

7 And Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. 9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the multitude, in order that they might not crowd Him; 10 for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed about Him in order to touch Him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall down before Him and cry out saying, "You are the Son of God!" 12 And He earnestly warned them not to make Him known. 13 And He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. 14 And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. 16 And he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), 17 and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of

Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. 20 And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. 21 And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

Amen. May God bless to us the reading of His holy and inerrant word.

Jesus was incredibly popular at this point in His ministry. True, the Herodians and the Pharisees, political and religious pressure groups with different worldviews but a common agenda in their suspicion of Jesus, were seeking every opportunity to catch Him, to make a charge against Him, but the common people heard Him gladly. There never was anything like this in the land of Judea. There'd been preachers before, but none like this one. There'd been people before who claimed the powers of miracles, but no one like this one. And they were coming to Him from all over the land: from Galilee to the north and west of the shores of the Sea of Galilee, from places like Nazareth where Jesus had lived and grown up; from Capernaum and the little towns and villages that surround the shore of the Sea of Galilee; but also from down south, from Jerusalem, from across the river Jordan, even the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon—great multitudes, thousands. Some have traveled north now to Galilee, the northwest shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, several days journey. Some perhaps might have taken a week, two-weeks to get there with sick folk, folk who are paralyzed, folk with diseases, folk with leprosy—great, great multitudes. And they're pressing; they're trying to get near Him; they want to touch Him. They've heard stories; they've seen the results of what He can do.

This is an incredible thing that we have just read here. You and I have never seen anything like this, never. B.B. Warfield makes this remark in some place or other, "The disease and death had almost been eliminated from the region of Capernaum." There was this little region in the globe, in the world, at that moment in time, and it seems at least that disease had been eradicated just for a moment. It was an incredible moment in the history of redemption and of God's dealings with His people. Along with that, as you might have predicted it, come demonic responses. The demons are busy. The devil is busy. And the demons are now shouting out, "This is the Son of God," and Jesus bids them to be quiet. He will not have the demonic realm testify as to who He is.

And Jesus, at this point, does an extraordinary thing, a remarkable thing, a very pointed, deliberate thing. He calls together the twelve disciples. There's a moment, there's an enormous crowd, and they're pushing and shoving, and it looks as though Jesus is going to be pushed right back into the Sea of Galilee. And maybe His feet are already beginning to touch the water, and he calls for one of the disciples—maybe Peter, Andrew, James, John—'Fisherman, get a boat!' Mark doesn't expand on the story, just leaves it there. And then Jesus goes up a mountain to depart from the crowds. How He was able to do that I don't know.

What mountain it was, I don't know. How long it took Him to get from the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee to this mountain, I don't know, but He went up a mountain and called the twelve disciples to go with Him. And I want us to look at this account from three different perspectives: How He called the disciples, why He called the disciples, and who did He call?

## I. How did He call the disciples?

How did He call the disciples? He had called some of them before. We've already seen this in the gospel of Mark back in chapter 1. We read of Jesus walking along the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee and He calls James and John and Simon and Andrew, fishermen, and He calls them to be His disciples. They have been following Him since that time, off and on. Maybe, as far as we know, it wasn't a full-time following. We know Peter had a wife and a mother-in-law. We've already been introduced to them in the gospel of Mark. No doubt Peter would have gone back and forth to his home and then spent some time with Jesus and then back again.

You'd never guess this just by cursory reading of the gospel of Mark but in comparing with the other gospels, some 18 months has passed by since Jesus began His ministry at the time of His baptism with John the Baptist down at the River Jordan. Some 18 months have gone by but now there is something distinctive. There'd been a reference in the previous chapter to a group called "the disciples of John," in contrast to Jesus' disciples. And do you remember the question? It was about fasting. John's disciples fasted but Jesus' disciples did not fast. There was a loose, general term called *disciples*. But now Jesus is calling twelve disciples. He still sometimes calls them *disciples*, but sometimes now they're going to be called *apostles*, twelve ordinary men to be His disciples, to be apostles as they would be known...and it's some halfway through the public ministry of Jesus. These men are going to be the foundation of the New Testament Church. Paul will say that the New Testament Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, these twelve men, or at least eleven of them and one more that will come later after Pentecost, or just before Pentecost. This little group of men is the embryo of the New Testament Church that will grow and expand through all the world, even to this gathering this evening. We are a result, we are a direct result of what Jesus did here on this mountain.

Do note some things with me. Note the context of this event. Mark is startling as he describes the context. It's a context of opposition. Jesus is being opposed. There's an open attempt now to destroy Jesus. His own family doesn't understand Him. Isn't that an extraordinary statement, "His own people"? And maybe that's a reference to His own family, His relatives, and they're saying, 'He's lost His senses.' Well, don't be too hard on them. If this was a relative of yours who was going about claiming to be the Son of God, perhaps you'd think he's lost his senses too unless you actually believed he was the Son of God, and

it's apparent that these relatives of Jesus didn't believe in Him at this point. There's opposition. Jesus from now on will be sought after. They will be looking for every opportunity to destroy Him, to cut Him down, to find some means of opposing Him. Jesus hasn't yet begun to speak openly of His betrayal and crucifixion and death. That will come. But for the next 18 months, Jesus is a marked man, and He's calling twelve disciples to follow Him in the context of suffering, in the context of the cost of what that would mean, "That if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up a cross and follow Me."

Notice that Jesus goes up a mountain. I don't want to expand too much on that. Mountains are sometimes significant in the history of redemption. Revelation is often revealed to some of God's choicest servants on a mountain. Perhaps it's just as simple that Jesus needed to get away from the crowd, but notice what He does there. It's on this mountain that He summons those to be with Him. Mark doesn't elaborate on it, but the other gospels elaborate on it a great deal, Luke especially, that on this mountain Jesus spends time in prayer, and from Luke's account He spends the whole night in prayer. And He actually summons or appoints or ordains these twelve to be His disciples in the morning.

Jesus needed to pray. What an extraordinary thing that is that the eternal Son of God who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, who was very God of very God, and yet in His incarnate condition as a man, before an event of immense significance and immense importance, spends this evening in prayer. Now Jesus didn't do that every night. Jesus went to bed and slept like the rest of us do. But there were special occasions, and this apparently was one of them when before the appointing of the twelve, He spends the night in prayer.

But notice also that they were chosen by Christ. Verse 13, "He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him." The choice is a deliberate choice of Jesus. That's unusual. In these times it was the norm for a disciple to attach himself to someone. Apparently, that seems to be the way that John the Baptist had his disciples: They attached themselves to him. They saw something in John, and they were moved by his preaching, and they became his disciples. It was a voluntary act of theirs. But it's not that here. Jesus does this appointing. He calls them. He summons them. He says to Simon and Andrew and James and John and Matthew and Thaddaeus and the others, 'You come and be My disciples.' "You did not choose Me," He will say to them, "but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit." In the upper room He will remind them on several occasions, "I have chosen you out of the world." By a deliberate choice of Jesus, these twelve were appointed.

## **II. Why did He call these disciples?**

Now why did He call these disciples? And there are several things here worthy of note. First of all, He chose twelve. He chose twelve. Every Jew would know the

significance of the number twelve. Every Jew—it doesn't matter whether he had minimum knowledge of the Scriptures, he would know the significance of twelve. Twelve was the number of the twelve tribes. There were twelve tribes in Israel. There was a deeply significant thing that Jesus would appoint twelve disciples because it would say immediately that He was appointing a new Israel, having perhaps some measure of continuity with ancient Israel but having also its distinctive features. You will remember, of course, how Paul will take this very concept in the epistle Galatians in the sixth chapter and he will refer to the Galatians as “the Israel of God,” and he's just been spending 5 chapters explaining that the church is made of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ and they are the Israel of God. And Jesus is choosing twelve. Ten of the tribes had long since been lost. When the Assyrians came and invaded Judea and Jerusalem, ten of the tribes were lost after that. And as though ancient Israel was no more, Jesus is establishing a new order of Israel. He's establishing His Church. He's establishing the people of God, a new city whose builder and maker is God, who are marching toward the heavenly Jerusalem.

And notice also, very specifically in verse 14, that He chose these twelve in order, Mark says, “...that they might be with Him.” That's amazing, isn't it? It's a simple thing for Mark to say, and you can pass over it without examining the significance of what Mark is actually telling you. Jesus appoints these twelve, first of all, in order that they might be with Him, as though Mark is saying that in some way or another Jesus needed, yes, *needed* the company of this twelve. “Ha!” you might say. “Jesus is in need of no one. He's the Son of God”...but He was also a man. He was also a human being. He was also fully man—“and it is not good for man to be alone”—and needed the social context of the interchange of fellowship that comes from close proximity with these twelve.

He was choosing the foundation, of course, of the New Testament church but He needed these twelve to be with Him, to be with Him in another sense, to be with Him in order that they might be learners, disciples, students, they might watch Him. They've been discipled, some of them for some time in a loose general sort of way, but now they were going to join the advance guard. Now they were going to join the equivalent of “the Spiritual Marines.” They would eat with Him. They'd have breakfast with Him. They'd have lunch with Him. They'd rest with Him. They'd listen to Him talk as they would walk along the road along the Sea of Galilee, as they would make their journey down south to Jerusalem. There'd be those extraordinary moments when Jesus would begin to talk and there'd be a sort of hush as they walked along, and Jesus would expand and expound on some grand theme, maybe a Bible study from the Old Testament. They would learn and they'd make mental notes. They didn't have video recorders or tape recorders or some of the modern little gizmos that are so natty today, so they'd have to watch and listen and be astute. They'd listen to extraordinary sermons that He would preach, extraordinary sermons, some of the most profound things they'd ever heard that would move them to the very core of their being.

What sort of things would you watch in the Savior if you knew He was the Son of God and the Messiah and God's appointed and chosen deliverer of His people? You'd watch everything about Him! You'd watch the way He would react to hostility. You'd watch his demeanor with women—and, oh, what an extraordinary way Jesus had with women, in a way that broke some of the Jewish social customs and norms of the day and raised the importance of women and in their social status. Yes, Christianity has done more of that than any other religion and it's all due to Jesus. Whatever was going to happen to Him, they would be there. They would be with Him.

I wonder what He was like when He got up in the morning. I don't want too many people to see me when I get up in the morning, only my wife. I wonder what Jesus was like when He was tired and hungry. When they would make that journey down to Jerusalem, and you know there was no Holiday Inn. They would sleep under the stars, and they can't imagine it. During those times when sleep perhaps wasn't coming and they would talk as they would lie on the ground underneath the shade, perhaps, of a tree and look at the stars and see some of the stars, and I wonder if Jesus would say things like, 'I made those.' These gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This gospel of Mark was dictated, as tradition has it, from Peter, because Mark wasn't one of the apostles. That's why you can trust this gospel because these men were eyewitnesses. They know what they're talking about. They've been with Jesus.

And notice He sends them forth to preach and to exercise authority over disease and over the demonic realm. He sends them forth. The verb "to send forth" is the root from which we get the word *apostle*, because that's what an apostle is: somebody who is sent forth from the King to be a representative spokesman on behalf of the King of King's and Lord of Lord's. They would be "the sent ones." That's what they would be called, "the sent ones." Yes, just as with *disciple*, the word *apostle* in the New Testament can sometimes have a more general term and a more general meaning, but by in large *apostles* were these twelve, or these eleven minus Judas Iscariot with the replacement of Matthias. You and I are not apostles in that sense. We never have been and we never will be. Jesus is appointing the twelve, and He's appointing them to be with Him, and He's appointing them to be the sent ones, to be His ambassadors, His messengers to go forth and preach the gospel and to have authority, to have almost a unique authority over the realm of disease and the demonic.

### **III. Whom did He call?**

Now whom did He call? Well, notice whom He didn't call. Not a single Rabbi, not a single professional theologian, and that hurts. Not one, not one was a professional theologian, not one was a scholar as we would understand the term. There's a very famous classic work called *The Training of the Twelve* from the 19th century written by A. B. Bruce. It's a wonderful, wonderful book. And Bruce

says, "They were stupid, slow-minded persons." He goes too far but they weren't scholars. And not one of them was a woman either, and I have to say that. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way. I don't mean that in a put down sort of way, but it's an observation that has to be made. It was twelve *men* that He called. It was twelve men that He called because the apostolic office belonged to men. Yes, and that has enormous ramifications that we disabuse at our peril.

They were ordinary men—yes, that's the title, isn't it, of John MacArthur's wonderful new book on the twelve disciples, *Twelve Ordinary Men*. Twelve ordinary men, insignificant men in the eyes of the world, fishermen. Do you notice not one of them was from the south? Not one of them from Judea, not one of them from Jerusalem. You might think that it would have been an astute thing to do to choose at least one or two representatives from Jerusalem, the capital city—but no, not one. They were all northerners with accents.

And many of them would die as martyrs for the faith. Peter—dear, dear Peter, with whom we so easily identify because he's represented in Scripture warts and all. I'm so glad Peter is one of the disciples. According to Eusebius, the church historian, he was made to watch his wife's crucifixion and then following that he himself was crucified upside down, according to traditions, because he felt unworthy to be executed in the same manner as his Savior. Andrew, Peter's brother, under the order of the governor of Achaia was apparently crucified on a saltier, an 'X' shaped cross, exhorting people to trust in Christ as he died. James, whose death is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles in chapter 12, under the orders of Herod Agrippa the First. Philip, a missionary to Heliopolis, and the first to be martyred after James. And Matthew, the writer of the gospel of Matthew, a tax collector—that Jesus would call a tax collector! We've already looked at it in the gospel of Mark in just previous weeks. And Matthew, tradition says he was burnt at the stake. And Thomas, dear doubting Thomas, tradition says he was thrust through with a spear. And Simon the Zealot—imagine that! A terrorist, a man who was part of a group seeking the downfall of the Roman empire by force of arms, tradition says he was killed. And Judas the son of James, who was sometimes called Thaddaeus, which actually means "Mama's boy," and about whom we know very little except that he was a Mama's boy, and tradition says that He was clubbed to death.

Apart from Judas who was to take his own life, only, as far as we know, two of the apostles lived into old age—John, of course, being one of them. But the rest of them would pay the ultimate sacrifice for belonging to the apostleship of Jesus. And perhaps as we bring this to a close tonight, we need to say something about Judas. Yes, that Jesus would call one to be one of the twelve who would be one who would betray Him. None of the disciples had the least suspicion of Judas at this point. He appeared to all of them as a fellow disciple and was given the honor of looking after the moneybag. Various folk and tradition says, and Luke seems to imply and hint that some wealthy women especially would give money to the disciples in order for them to buy food. And Judas looked after that and he

too was one of the twelve, an extraordinary, diverse group of people. And to think the church is built on all of that!

And those twelve - who would you choose to be the twelve? You'd think of the grandest theologians in the country, some of the most significant leaders. I was introduced once as somebody who had had an extraordinary, significant ministry. I have no idea what that means. These men had no significance whatsoever except that Jesus called them to be His disciples. God builds His church by the power of His Spirit and execution of His word and decree and not by worldly means. May God write these things upon our hearts for His name's sake. Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank You for Your word and for this glimpse of the twelve disciples. What an extraordinary thing that is. And we pray, O Lord, that once again we might catch the vision that the kingdom of God isn't brought about by the powers and insights of men but by Your power and by Your Spirit. And so teach us then, O Lord, to wait upon You. And hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

## **A Guide to the Evening Service**

### **The Hymn Medley**

#### **I Love to Tell the Story**

The words are similar to another hymn, *Tell Me the Old, Old Story*, and both are derived from Katherine Hankey's *The Old, Old Story*.

#### **Amazing Grace**

John Newton's most popular hymn. It speaks of God's grace to us in saving us from the consequences of our sins through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **Wonderful Grace of Jesus**

The words are by Haldor Lillenas who emigrated to America as a child; his family settled first in South Dakota, then moved to Oregon in 1889. He attended Deets Pacific Bible College in Los Angeles, California (later renamed to Pasadena College); studied music at the Siegel-Myers School of Music in Chicago, Illinois; and received an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Olivet Nazarene College. His first pastorate was in Lompoc, California, in 1910; he later pastored in Redlands, California, and Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1924, he founded the Lillenas Music Company (bought by the Nazarene Publishing Company in 1930), and worked as an editor there until his retirement in 1950.



## *The Sermon*

Tonight's sermon recounts the calling of the twelve disciples.

### First Group

Simon Peter The man of rock  
Andrew Peter's brother  
James and John Sons of Zebedee and Sons of Thunder

### Second Group

Philip The earnest inquirer  
Bartholomew, or Nathanael The guileless Israelite  
Thomas The melancholy  
Matthew The publican (so-called by himself only)

### Third Group

James (the son) of Alphaeus (James the Less? Mark 15:40)  
Lebbeus, Thaddeus, Judas of James The three-named disciple  
Simon The Zealot  
Judas, the man of Kerioth The Traitor

Such were the men whom Jesus chose to be with Him while He was on this earth, and to carry on His work after He left it. Such were the men whom the church celebrates as the 'glorious company of the apostles.' The praise is merited; but the glory of the twelve was not of this world. In a worldly point of view they were a very insignificant company indeed—a band of poor illiterate Galilean provincials, utterly devoid of social consequence, not likely to be chosen by one having supreme regard to prudential considerations. Why did Jesus choose such men? Was He guided by feelings of antagonism to those possessing social advantages, or of partiality for men of His own class? No; His choice was made in true wisdom. If He chose Galileans mainly, it was not from provincial prejudice against those of the south; if, as some think, He chose two or even four of his own kindred, it was not from nepotism; if He chose rude, unlearned, humble men, it was not because He was animated by any petty jealousy of knowledge, culture, or good birth. If any rabbi, rich man, or ruler had been willing to yield himself unreservedly to the service of the kingdom, no objection would have been taken to him on account of his acquirements, possessions, or titles. The case of Saul of Tarsus, the pupil of Gamaliel, proves the truth of this statement. Even Gamaliel himself would not have been objected to, could he have stooped to become a disciple of the unlearned Nazarene. But, alas! neither he nor any of his order would condescend so far, and therefore the despised One did not get an

opportunity of showing His willingness to accept as disciples and choose for apostles such as they were. [A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (1894), 34-3.]

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