

## Transcript

### The Jesus Story - The Disciples

Up to now, while looking at the life of Jesus, we have seen the personal preparation that Jesus went through; His birth and His development through those silent years.

We then saw His presentation at His baptism and the father's declaration:

***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”***

In the last session, we read in Luke chapter four of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, and, when the temptation ended this is what we read in verse 13:

***13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.***

And then in verse 14 this is what we read:

***14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.***

Now between verses 13 and 14 there is an eleven-months gap. Matthew and Mark have the same eleven-months gap. It is only John who records what happened during Jesus' early ministry in Judea.

In the other three gospels we have the early incidents in the life of Jesus recorded. His birth up to him being about thirty years old. John's gospel skips all this. The first appearance of Jesus in the gospel of John occurs after Jesus had been baptized.

John the apostle very clearly records for us the testimony of John the Baptist, declaring just who Jesus was.

***35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.***

***36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”***

From what we read in John's gospel, we find evidence that John must have written his gospel long after the other gospels. He seems to take for granted that the early life of Jesus had been covered. What John does is fill in the gaps.

What we are about to look at are the things that are not recorded in the other gospels. John was the only one of the gospel writers who was there and witnessed these things first hand.

Something else that we need to understand, at first, John the Baptist himself did not know exactly who he was preparing the way for. John's knowledge of the one who was coming was not a natural knowledge (1:31–33). It was knowledge that had come to him through revelation when the Spirit descended on Jesus. (1:32).

The knowledge of God is beyond human reach. It is a gift of divine revelation. John knew he was preparing the way for someone who would eventually be revealed to Israel, so he came baptising as he was told to do, but he did not know exactly who he was preparing the way for; that would be revealed to him later.

This does not mean that John did not know anything about Jesus as a person before

he baptised Him. John and Jesus were cousins, their mothers knew one another and became pregnant about the same time, both through a special miracle of God.

Matthew 3:13 tells us that, when Jesus came to be baptized, John said:

**13 *"It is you that should baptize me."***

From this we see, that John did know Jesus, and even knew that he was a far greater teacher than he himself was. It was on the basis of what he saw at the baptism of Jesus that caused John to testify that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God who was foretold as coming into the world.

John then goes on to describe the things that happened when Jesus was baptised. He finished with this testimony of Jesus in verse thirty-four, the final testimony given by John the Baptist:

**34 *And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.***

John the Baptist has completed his personal ministry. Now he deflects glory and interest away from himself and draws all the attention to Jesus, describing powerfully who he is and what he will do.

This is where I would like to continue our looking at the life of Jesus, and to do this, we need to look at the things that are only found in the gospel of John - how those early disciples of Jesus came together.

We pick the story up in chapter one and verse thirty-five:

**35 *Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.***

**36 *And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"***

**37 *The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.***

These two disciples of John would become the first two disciples of Jesus and this is what I would like to look a little closer at; the early disciples of Jesus.

Before we start we need to have this firmly fixed in our minds - to be a disciple is simply to be a learner or a pupil; and when looking at the disciples of Jesus, there are a few questions that we need answers too. I will try to answer some of them.

On the next day John again testified regarding Jesus. He was with two of his disciples, when he saw Jesus and again called Him the Lamb of God. These two disciples in turn followed Jesus.

One of these disciples turned out to be Andrew, the brother of Peter. There is good reason to believe that the other disciple was John the Apostle, who wrote this book. This is based on the fact that the apostle John often describes stories at which he was personally present, but he never names himself.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother:

**41 *He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).***

**42 *And he brought him to Jesus.***

The remainder of the story talks about a group of five people who became disciples of Jesus. The other four are all named and all became apostles: Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, and this strongly implies that this account is intended to introduce us to five of Jesus' first disciples, all of who became apostles.

In that case, the unnamed disciple must surely be John the Apostle. We shall be looking at these first five disciples a little closer, but here is a good question! Just how many disciples did Jesus have?

Ask most people that question, and the answer that they would give you is twelve. Well, here is something to think about. When addressing the crowd in John 8v31 we read. To the Jews who had believed Him Jesus said:

***31 If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples.***

So here we find that Jesus had a crowd of disciples. On another occasion in Luke 10v1, this is what we read:

***1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place He was about to go.***

So, here we find another seventy-two disciples. So we can see that Jesus had many disciples, and these disciples varied in their relationship with Jesus.

We can read of Joseph of Arimathea. He was a secret disciple. We read in John 19v38:

***38 Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he feared the Jews.***

And in John 6v66, we read of short term disciples:

***66 From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.***

And as we look at the disciples of Jesus we can see how they developed in their ministry. Jesus did not select all of His disciples in one day or week. They came in twos and threes over a period of months.

Andrew calls his brother Simon to come and meet Jesus, the one who he believes to be the Messiah. It is during this first meeting that Jesus gives Simon a new name – Peter.

Some, like Peter, began to follow Jesus while still carrying on his fishing business, but after a while, Jesus called him into full-time ministry, and he left all to follow Jesus.

But there is something else that we need to take particular notice of, and that is how some of the disciples developed a closer relationship with Jesus than the others. It may help us just to look at the way these early disciples were called. In the gospel of John in the first chapter, after the baptism and temptation of Jesus, in verse 35 we have what must have been the very first successful Gospel Crusade. John the Baptist preached:

35 "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

John and Andrew heard, accepted, and followed Jesus. The first thing that Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him “We have found the Messiah”. Then he brought Simon to Jesus.

The minute that Andrew leaves Jesus, he goes to find his brother Simon with the great news. The experience that Andrew had was not just to be enjoyed, it was to be shared.

All his life, Andrews only claim to fame was that he was the brother of Simon Peter. If ever anyone talked about Andrew, he was always referred to as the brother of Simon Peter. But, if Andrew had not taken this good news to his brother, Peter could have lived and died as just another fisherman from Galilee.

That mighty apostle that stood and preached on the day of Pentecost, and saw three thousand souls added to Kingdom of God. The man that God used to establish so many of the early saints in the Church of God. He was led to the Lord by his brother.

Peter heard no great preacher, nor witnessed any great miracles. Just a testimony from a brother who had found Christ for himself, and wanted to share his great experience.

And when Jesus saw Peter, he said: “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, a Stone). Jesus here is confirming his authority over Peter and telling him that he will be a different man; a man who is about to acquire a character that fits his new name.

This is not the image that we find when looking at the old Peter, but despite Peter’s frailty, this name signals Jesus’ vision of what Peter will become.

After John, Andrew and Peter found the Lord we read in John 1:43:

***43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me”.***

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

After talking to Jesus for himself, Nathanael becomes the fifth and final of the early disciples. Nathanael is cynical, until this encounter takes place. The invitation to Nathanael is the one that will be used again and again, so simple and yet so effective. “Come and see.”

Conversion is not about knowledge alone; it is about coming yourself and having a relationship with Jesus personally.

It’s interesting to note the different ways that these early disciples found Jesus. It is worth taking note that God uses different methods to bring men to Himself. Though they were led by different ways to the Lord they all embarked on the same road, embraced the same truths, served the same master. Ultimately they would reach the same home.

It does not matter what a person has been or what form their conversion took. If we are to see the real evidence of discipleship, we need to look at just how close a

person follows Christ.

We see in the first five disciples, whatever background they came from, differing positions and personalities; in Jesus Christ they found one that could satisfy every need of their heart, one who gave them a new purpose in life. One for whom they were prepared to leave all.

Not every believer is called to a full-time Christian vocation, but every believer is called to be a full-time Christian. That means that following Christ must be your number one priority.

Those chosen by Jesus varied widely in their spiritual stature. None of them were outstanding in quickness or perception or eagerness to obey. Parables had to be explained, old lessons re-learned. Thoughts better left unspoken, were often blurted out. They slept when He needed company. Quarreled when He was heavy hearted. Forsook Him and fled when the crisis came.

These were no spiritual giants. They were called as they were, for what he could make out of them.

Don't ever despise the day of small things. The Church that Jesus Christ established, and proclaimed: "That the very gates of Hell would prevail against it", began with this small group of disciples.

I think it would help us, just for a few minutes to look at those first disciples, and see how they began to develop in their relationship with the Lord.

The disciples did not begin by casting out demons or healing the sick. Peter did not begin by preaching to three thousand. They all began by acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master. They became disciples the moment that they accepted who Jesus really was, and as they began to follow Him, their relationship developed, they worked at being the disciples of Jesus.

Jesus had to be content with fishermen and tax collectors because they were the best that could be had. The qualifications that Jesus was looking for were simply men who were willing to leave all and follow Him. In these, Jesus could see honest, believing men who possessed sacrificial hearts.

There are some good lessons to be learned from those early disciples. First of all, just what are the qualifications that we need to become a disciple? We get some idea when Paul writes to the disciples at Corinth, and reminds them of what they were when Jesus called them. This is a text that we need to constantly remind ourselves of in 1 Corinthians 1v26. This is what we read:

***26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.***

***27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.***

***28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him.***

I think that about covers all of us. If we have any of these qualifications on our CV then we are first class candidates for the job of Disciples.

There is something else that we really need to understand, and that is, that it is possible to be a Christian without being a disciple. It is possible to know the forgiveness of sins, and yet be unwilling to follow the path of discipleship.

The moment that any man or woman repents of their sin, and asks for forgiveness; as soon as they accept Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, from that moment they are saved, they become a Christian. Both their life and lifestyle should be completely changed.

The disciple is the one, who follows on to know the Lord. A true disciple is one who is not content to know that they have an insurance policy which guarantees a place in heaven. Salvation does not cost us anything, but discipleship can be very costly.

The Christian disciple is one who learns of Christ, follows Him, and obeys His commands. If anyone wants to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, then everything else no matter how precious, must take second place. Jesus Christ must have the first place in the life of anyone who wants to be His disciple.

And if we want find out just what sort of disciple we are, the only way to do this, is to see just how close we follow the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are going to develop as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not going to be judged solely on the things that we say, but on the way that we react to His commandments.

***“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”***

God who would have all men to be saved shows His ability to draw all men, in the call of these first disciples. John and Andrew came through the preaching of John the Baptist. Peter and Nathanael as the result of personal witness. Philip. Without any human involvement, Jesus finds Philip. Their commitment was seen in their desire to learn.

In Acts 2v42, we have the charter laid down that made the early disciples great. They devoted themselves. Just look at what they devoted themselves to:

***42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.***

If we are going to be a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are really going to have to work at it. If we are not going forward, we are going back. It is impossible to stand still in discipleship. How can we say that we are following Christ if we are not going forward?

The way forward we have just read: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” To be a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to be more than just a hearer, but a doer of the word God.

You read of any of the disciples in the New Testament. The one thing that they had in common was not their position, wealth, ability, or anything like that. It was simply, that they were prepared, when Jesus called them, to leave all and follow Him.

They were 'called', they were 'committed' and they 'continued'. The standard for discipleship has never altered, and the call to everyone of us is still the same. 'Follow me'.

Just look at the promise that Jesus makes in John 1:51:

***51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."***

Ahead of these disciples lay the most thrilling, exciting times that a man could ever dream of. They would witness mighty miracles. They would hear words that caused men to exclaim: "Never a man spoke like this man".

For three years, they would share experiences of joy and sorrow with the Son of God. They would witness not only His power, but His compassion as well. Of course they would make mistakes, there would be times when they would fail the Lord, but the longer they followed Him, the more like Him they would become.

In the next session we shall be looking at the first miracle that Jesus performed, and the impact that it had on His disciples. The whole story is found in the first eleven verses of John chapter 2. Verse one tells us:

***1 And the third day, there was a marriage at Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.***

***2 And both Jesus was called and his disciples, to the marriage.***

It finishes in verse eleven:

***11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.***

And in between these two verses is a great story. I think, if you had Jesus as a guest, you would certainly invite him back.

It is worth noting that those who knew him best, remembered him as Jesus. Those who walked with him remembered him not with a title or designation, but with a name - Jesus.

Down the years so many people have been inspired to write songs about that name:

***How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believers ear.***

***There is a name, a name, I highly treasure.***

***Jesus is the sweetest name I know.***

Who would not want a friend like Jesus? But, this exactly what His disciples became, this is what Jesus Himself had to say about their relationship in John 15:14:

***14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."***

These first five disciples would be among the twelve named by Jesus after a whole night of prayer and they would be confirmed as apostles. We may not qualify as apostles, but, Jesus tells us plainly here how we can become friends. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."