

(Matt. 10:1) - The Lord had spoken of the harvest and the need for laborers to gather in His people (Matt. 9:37-38). Harvest has a two-fold application. (1) It announces that the Lord is ready to call a people into the fold of salvation, therefore, workers were needed. God has determined all things to His own glory in the salvation of His chosen people by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. God has also determined the means by which He will accomplish His unchangeable purpose. All the means that God has determined and provided for this glorify Him in His power, goodness, and mercy to save sinners conditioned on Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work of righteousness. God has determined that His people (elect) must hear the Gospel for salvation, and there must be laborers (preachers, witnesses) to proclaim this truth (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:18-24). This does not mean that God needs us to do His great work nor that God will fail unless we do our part. It does not mean, as some say, that “we are the only arms, legs, or eyes, that God has.” It means that this is God’s way to glorify Himself in bringing His people to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life.

(2) The end of the world and the final judgment are said to be the great and final harvest (Matt. 13:30). Some will be harvested as tares to be consigned to eternal damnation and death, while others will be harvested as wheat to be glorified forever with Christ, their Savior and Lord. The only hope for sinners, then, is to be confronted with the message of God’s saving mercies in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to be effectually brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. In the final harvest, only those who stand before God, having already been justified by His grace in Christ, washed clean in His blood from all their sins and clothed in His righteousness imputed, will stand.

“AND WHEN HE HAD CALLED UNTO HIM HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES” - All except one of these men were called to Christ for salvation whereupon they were called to follow and learn from Him. All except Judas, who later betrayed the Lord, were sinners saved by grace. Then they were called and equipped to be *“APOSTLES,”* which means “one who is sent out” with the message of salvation, Christ crucified and risen from the dead as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. They were not saved nor called because of any inherent or natural qualifications or goodness within themselves. It was all due to God’s power and grace in Christ. They were not, nor did they ever become, special saints to whom other lesser believers should or could pray. Even when they later argued over who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, the Lord told them, *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 18:3-4).

“HE GAVE THEM POWER AGAINST UNCLEAN SPIRITS, TO CAST THEM OUT, AND TO HEAL ALL MANNER OF SICKNESS AND ALL MANNER OF DISEASE” - The first qualification for an apostle was that he be a sinner saved by grace and brought by God to know the truth of how God saves sinners by His grace through Christ. An apostle must know the true Gospel. He must be a preacher of righteousness - the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ. False apostles preach false gospels (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:2). The next qualification is that an apostle must be given the gift of preaching, i.e. communicating the Gospel and its doctrines so as to identify and distinguish the truth of Christ as opposed to the lies of false religion.

Other qualifications of an apostle were: (1) to have been a witness of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 9:1), (2) to have been explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:15), and (3) to have the ability to perform signs and wonders that would accompany and support the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 2:43; 2 Cor. 12:12). These were the sign gifts of ministry that were needed for the church in the early New Covenant days before the full revelation of God

in the Bible was completed (Mark 16:20). Many believe these gifts are not given to us today as they are not needed because we have the written Word of God as the authentication of our preaching (2 Tim. 3:14-17). Some claim to have these gifts even now, but we must listen to their preaching and not argue about their gifts. Do they preach the true Gospel or do they preach a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). Some false churches claim to be “holiness” or “apostolic” churches, but they preach a false gospel of salvation conditioned on sinners. They are not *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone”* (Eph. 2:20). There are no apostles today, but we have the Word of God as revealed to His apostles.

(Matt. 10:2-4) - “THE FIRST, SIMON, WHO IS CALLED PETER” - “Simon” means “hearing,” as he was brought to hear and believe the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. “Peter” means a “stone,” and describes Peter’s firmness in the Gospel by God’s grace and power. Many erroneously think that this describes Peter as the rock of the church as in Matthew 16:18, but Christ was not referring to Peter as the rock of the church but Peter’s confession of Christ in Matthew 16:16. Christ is the Rock of the church. Peter, as are all believers, was (and is) one of the little stones that make up the spiritual building, the church. Next is Peter’s brother “ANDREW,” who was at first a disciple of John but then followed Christ, and he brought Peter to Christ (John 1:35-42). **“JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE, AND JOHN HIS BROTHER”** - The Lord called these brothers *“Boanerges, which is sons of thunder”* (Mark 3:17), probably because of their zeal for the Gospel. Their mother was sister to Mary, the human mother of Jesus, so they were first cousins to Jesus according to the flesh. **“PHILIP, AND BARTHOLOMEW”** - Philip was called out by the Lord, and he found his brother, Bartholomew, also called *“Nathaniel”* (John 1:45-51). Notice that Christ said of Nathaniel that he was *“an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,”* which seems to indicate one who has been brought to true faith in Christ, a spiritual Israelite (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:7).

“THOMAS” whose Greek name was Didymus (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us no information about this man, but John records four instances in which Thomas is mentioned, and Luke also cites him in the book of Acts. **“MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN”** is the writer of this Gospel narrative. Notice how he was inspired to identify himself as *“the publican”* to make certain that we know he was a sinner saved by grace! **“JAMES THE SON OF ALPHEUS”** - We know little about this man except that he was a true disciple and apostle of Christ. **“LEBBAEUS, WHOSE SURNAME WAS THADDAEUS”** - We know little of this man, but that he was also called *“Judas, the brother of James”* (Acts 1:13; cf. John 14:22; Luke 6:16). **“SIMON THE CANAANITE,”** also known as *“Simon Zelotes”* (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Before his conversion he belonged to a Jewish sect call the *“Zealots,”* which were violent rebels against the Roman Empire. As Simon was zealous to fight Rome before he was brought to Christ, he became even more zealous in the cause of Christ to preach the Gospel.

“JUDAS ISCARIOT, WHO ALSO BETRAYED HIM” - Judas was a false disciple who is remembered for one thing - he betrayed the Lord. He witnessed Jesus’ ministry, teaching, and the miracles. He was the treasurer for the group and used this position to steal from their resources (John 12:6). The Lord knew from the very beginning what Judas would do - *“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* (John 6:70; 13:26). Christ said that Judas was not clean; i.e., he had not been born again and was not forgiven of his sins (John 13:10-11). In fact, Judas was empowered to do what he did by the devil himself (John 13:27). Judas was a remarkable hypocrite who appeared to be no different from any of the other apostles (John 13:22). Though Judas was accountable for his sinful betrayal (Matt. 26:24), the Lord tells us that his betrayal was part of *“the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23), and it was prophesied in the Old Testament (Psa. 41:9; cf. John 13:18; Zech. 11:12-13).