

JESUS OF HISTORY, CHRIST OF FAITH

Unit 7: Jesus and the Apostles

Lecture

Unit 7 seeks to address three points:

- a. Who were the disciples of Jesus and what does it mean to be a disciple
- b. What was the early church REALLY like?
- c. What was specifically the role of women in the early church?

There are three groups that are part of Jesus' ministry:

1. **Crowds:** The large, undifferentiated mass of people following Jesus (c.f. Mark 5:31). Jesus attracted large crowds up until his arrest. People who were part of this crowd were both poor and rich (the gospels show a very balanced view of Jesus). These crowds followed J because of his preaching and healing, but that did not translate into deep, enduring commitment.

2. **Disciples:** Disciple can be translated from the Greek to mean "student" and is used almost 300 times in the four gospels and Acts (it's absent from the rest of the NT) and refers to the people close to Jesus. The notion of a disciple comes from the OT relationship between Elijah and Elisha.

Who qualified as a disciple of Jesus?

a. **Response to Jesus' Call:** Jesus is the one who takes the initiative by inviting people to follow him. (Mk 1:16-20). It is J' initiative in summoning a person to discipleship is a necessary condition for becoming his disciple.

b. **Physically Leaving their Home:** Being a disciple meant not simply following teachings, but to physically "tour" with Jesus. (Lk 9:59-62)

c. **Risking Danger and Hostility:** Jesus warned his disciples of the fierce and fatal costs of following him.

1. **Saving or Losing One's Life:** A disciple who clings selfishly or cowardly to this present life as the ultimate good will lose the true life in the kingdom of God. We need surrender one's old way of life, with all its ties, securities, expectations, if one it to attain the kingdom (Mt 10:39).

2. **Denying Oneself and Taking up One's Cross:** (Mk 8:34-38) To follow J is to say no to oneself as the center of one's existence. Equates discipleship with a shameful execution.

3. Facing Hostility from One's Family: (Lk 18:29-30) One must separate oneself from the financial and emotional support Lk 14:26. What about supporters of Jesus who did not leave their homes? (Jn 12:1-3; Lk 10:38-42) Were not disciples in the strict sense, but played the important role of providing Jesus and his disciples with food, lodging, and other forms of support when he came to their cities.

3. **Apostles:** Translated from the Aramaic, which means messenger or ambassador, Mark 3:16-19. One has to be a well-trained "disciple" (learning from the teacher) *before* one can be sent out as an "apostle" (representing the teacher).
 - a. Twelve Apostles:
 1. Simon Peter *crucified upside down, 65 ce*
 2. James (son of Zebedee) *died first decade after crucifixion*
 3. John (brother of James)
 4. Andrew
 5. Philip
 6. Bartholomew
 7. Matthew
 8. Thomas (twin)
 9. James (the small)
 10. Thaddeus/**Jude of James** (Luke/Acts)
 11. Simon the Zealot
 12. Judas Iscariot/Matthias
4. What do the Twelve Apostles Symbolize?
 - a. Example of Discipleship
 - b. Symbols of the Re-gathering of the Twelve Tribes of Israel
 - c. Prophetic Missionaries to Israel
5. What's special about Peter?
 - a. In all four gospels and acts present Peter as the spokesman and/or leader of the other apostles. He's always named first in all the lists (Mk 3:16-19; Acts 2:14).
 - b. His original name was Simon. His second name was Kepa (Aramaic) Cephas (Peter Grecized) which is translated as Petros in Greek. Kepa means rock or stone, while Petros means specifically isolated rock (Mt 16:18)
 - c. Peter's profession of faith occurs in some form in all four gospels (Mk 8:27-29). *church—ekklesia—only appears twice in the gospels.*
 - d. In Matthew 16:18-19, Peter has the keys to the kingdom; In John 21:15-17 Peter stands in place of Jesus as the good Shepherd.
 - e. Jesus, in Luke, looks to Peter as the leader of the apostles after his death—and after his turning away (Lk 22:31-32). This will continue in the book of Acts. In Luke he appears to Peter first (24:34).