

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

## Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 104- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 1

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### **Matthew 10:1-4**

**1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.**

**2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;**

**3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;**

**4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now throughout the History of Man- there have been two main Ways that Teachers instruct their Students:

1. The Greek Way
2. The Hebrew Way

The ancient Greeks used the Method that we are familiar with in this Country in School- where the Teacher stands up front of a room and the Students sit in front of him as he instructs them. The Teacher would instruct the Students as he talked and they took notes. And then they were tested in what they hopefully learned.

This is the most common form of Teaching that the world knows today; and it has produced some of the greatest minds in all of History. So, this Method is very fast and has been an outstanding success.

But the ancient Hebrews employed a very different and unique Way of Teaching. This form of Teaching had a Master and his Students- usually called "Disciples". And the Disciples followed the Master wherever he went. And they not only listened to what he said- but they literally copied what he did. So, in this

Method- the Master puts his arms around the Disciples and teaches by example. Some Disciples actually lived with their Master for several years as they learned the Trade or acquired the Knowledge from the Master.

So, the Hebrew Method is a “hands-on” style of Teaching whereby the Disciples learned what the Master taught by actually doing what he did. And this form of Teaching was much slower- yet produced Students with much practical Experience.

The Teacher in the Hebrew Method was called, “Teacher”; or “Master”. And while the Jews used terms like, “Teacher”- they didn’t use terms like “Professor”. That is strictly a Greek term.

It was common for a Teacher in the Jewish Method to have small Groups- so, the Teacher could spend quality time with all the Students or Learners or Disciples. But the Greeks almost always had a larger Group than the Hebrews. Yet neither one had large groups.

Now you have to understand that in the ancient world- a person’s Occupation was usually chosen for him. Many times- in both Hebrew and Greek Methods- the Teacher chose the Students. It was NOT common for the Students to choose the Teacher. But there were other Issues involved in determining a person’s Occupation. For example, if a person was “near-sighted”- he became an Academic and primarily worked inside. But if a person was “far-sighted”- he almost always worked outside. And that was because the ancient world didn’t have eye- glasses.<sup>1</sup>

Now the common man in Israel back in the 1st Century had to understand and speak and write several different Languages. Because of the many times God had disciplined the nation of Israel and other nations had taken them over and ruled over them- they brought their own Languages with them. So, by the Time we get to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- the most common Language among the Jews was *NOT* Hebrew. The Language of many Jews was Aramaic. Jesus Himself never spoke Hebrew. He spoke Aramaic. But other Jews in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Israel spoke Greek; while still others spoke Latin.

Only a small minority of Jews spoke Hebrew in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And this was one of the “great Offenses” that fueled the Pharisees’ desire to “purify” the Jewish people and bring them back to the Language that God had given them- which was Hebrew. And it was the Reason behind why the Apostle Matthew wrote this Gospel Record, originally, in Hebrew. He was trying to reach the people who had been indoctrinated by the Pharisees with the “Good News” that Jesus saves Sinners.

And there was a Jewish Institution at the time of our Lord called, the “*Shahlia*” which is an Aramaic word for, "Sent ones".

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<sup>1</sup> Tommaso da Modena’s portrait of the cardinal Hugh de Saint-Cher reading in a “Scriptorium” in 1352 AD, is considered the earliest pictorial evidence of the use of eyeglasses.

And the Shahlia referred to any official Representative of the Sanhedrin. Now as you may know- the Sanhedrin was a group of 70 men- that's what the word, "Sanhedrin" basically means- "the Seventy". So, there was group of 70 men who actually ruled Israel during the time that Jesus walked the earth.

And these men had a tremendous amount of Power and a tremendous amount of Authority. And periodically, they delegated that Power and Authority to official Representatives. And the Sanhedrin would *apostello* those official Representatives- they would "send" those Representatives "out" with ALL of the Authority of the Sanhedrin- to act on their behalf- usually to settle legal Disputes or Disputes about the Law of God, or other religious Disputes.

And in addition to the Sanhedrin- famous or prominent rabbis of that time also had *Shahlia*- they also had "sent ones" who would go out and carry their Authority; and teach their Message; and represent them.

So, the Jewish people of the 1st Century were very used to Apostles; they were very familiar with "sent ones"- *Shahlia*, who were sent forth into the world with the Authority or the Power to do the business of either the Sanhedrin Court itself or to carry on the teaching of very prominent Rabbis.

And that's exactly what Jesus was doing here. He's doing something very much in line with what other prominent Rabbis did at that time- So, by choosing these twelve men, Jesus is telling the world, *"I am going to have My own Shahlia. I am going to have My Own 'sent ones'; My own Apostles- just as the Sanhedrin does; and just as the famous rabbis always have- I'm going to have My own 'sent ones' who are going to bear the very same Divine Authority and Power that I have and they are going to teach the very same Doctrine that I teach."*

So, what Jesus has here is twelve men to whom He will delegate His Power and His Authority and His Message. And these men will then go out and go forth and represent Jesus as official Representatives of the Messiah.

Now the 1st Century Jew understood this Concept because over in the *Mishna*- which is a collection of the Writings of the rabbis of ancient Israel it says this,

"The one sent by the man is as the man himself."

So, they understood this kind of Identity- a commissioned Representative that they knew acted with the very same Authority as the one who had sent him.

So, an Apostle then was a title of great Respect; a title of great Honor; a title of Privilege; and a title of great Authority because the Office bore with it the identical Power of the one who had sent him.

Now **Mark 3** records this same event where Jesus chooses these men. And I want you to please turn with me to **Mark 3:13-15** and see what John Mark, who wrote his Gospel Account by the Authority of the Apostle Peter adds to this:

**13 And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.**

**14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,**

**15 and to have authority to cast out the demons.**

I want to stop there for a minute. Mark says:

**... so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,**

So, there's a two-step Process here. Before they could be "sent out" to preach; before they could be sent out- they had to first be "pulled in". So, it was absolutely critical here that these men be "with" Jesus before they be sent out. So, this "bringing in" first before they were sent out was critical to their Training.

In fact, it isn't until **Luke 9:1** that Jesus actually calls the twelve together and gave them Power and Authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And **Luke 9** is paralleled with **Matthew 10**. So, in Luke 6- Jesus is simply choosing them; He is identifying them and pulling them in. The next step is that Jesus will teach them. And then, after a period of intense training- Jesus will give them miracle Power- the Ability to cast out demons with their words. And then the final Step is that Jesus will then send these same men out into the world to *establish* Christianity in the earth.

So, in addition to the twelve Disciples listed here being chosen as the "Apostles" of Jesus- they were also His "*Shahlia*". And even though the most common term we use today is, "Apostles" it is very probable that the Jews, who were around Jesus during His Ministry, called these twelve men- the "*Shahlia*" as opposed to the Apostles.

So, these twelve men went "in Jesus' Name"; speaking "Jesus' Words". And they were given the very SAME Authority and Divine Power to heal; perform Miracles; and cast out demons- as well as raise the Dead as Jesus Himself did! And as we have already found out- Jesus did this to "multiply Himself"; as well as Answer the prayer Request Jesus asked the Disciples to pray in **Matthew 9:37b&38**:

**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.**

Now in our Day- there are those who lay claim to be an Apostle. And they add that Title to their business cards as though that means something. And they use that title to give themselves “spiritual Credibility” which, in many cases gets them some degree of Honor and Respect and even causes some people to fear them.

But unlike the “*wanna-be Apostles*” of our Day- the true and genuine Apostles were given the Power and Authority to do many things that no one before or since has been given- such as:

1. They will usher in the New Covenant by articulating what Jesus said and did while He was here on the earth (The Gospels); and what that which Jesus said and did *means* to people (the Epistles).
2. They will either write or have written the 27 Books of the New Testament
3. They will establish the Christian Church on the earth and become part of its Foundation
4. They will correctly interpret the Old Testament
5. They will give “Divine Credibility” to the radical Theology that they bring-through Signs and Wonders; Miracles; and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

... so, these men will do what no other group of men have ever done before or since.

But a true Apostle does not go forth to establish "a" Church like I did here on John Clark Road; and like many others have done all over the world. A true Apostle doesn't go forth to establish a Denomination or a particular Teaching. A true Apostle of Jesus was “sent out” to establish "THE" Church; the *Christian* Church. They were “sent out” so that by and through their Teachings- which were always backed up with Signs and Wonders and Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Spirit- so that the New Covenant itself- that was purchased through the Life and Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was firmly and eternally established in the earth.

So, the Ministry and the Calling and the Anointing and the Purpose and the Power and the Authority of a true Apostle was very narrow; it was very precise; and it was very specific. They were NOT sent out to simply preach the Gospel. They were sent out to *define* the Gospel; to *articulate* the Gospel to *develop* what the Gospel is and is not; and to write it down- so that all future Generations of believers would know what the Gospel is.

They were NOT sent out to simply talk about Jesus- but to actually define what Christianity is; and to teach that Christianity is- that it was NOT merely a

branch or a sect of Judaism- it is a completely separate Religion from modern-day Judaism- which is a Man-made and unbiblical Religion. Christianity is the *continuation* of the very *same* Divine Revelation that God began to show Abraham as recorded by Moses back in **Genesis**.

The Apostles were not just sent forth to simply pray for sick people. No, they had the very SAME Authority to heal organic diseases like Jesus did. They were able to cast out demons simply by speaking- because they had the very SAME absolute and total Power and Authority over fallen angels as Jesus had.

These men were not sent forth to just talk about what a person might do to please the Lord. These men were sent forth by Jesus Christ Himself to put down into writing the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man in 27 additional Books that were just as completely inspired and just as inerrant and just as infallible as the 39 Books of the Old Covenant!

And these men were not sent out to simply believe in Jesus- they were sent out to define what the very Nature and Character of the Lord Jesus Christ is. And they developed the collective Teachings that today we call the New Testament.

And as we saw last week- these men were also sent forth to be able to correctly and fully interpret what the 39 Books of the Old Covenant Prophets actually meant; and how what they all prophesied applied to Jesus; and how they were always pointing to the Day when Jesus would come.

And so based on all that- I will say this to you just as strongly as I know how - nobody before these men or after them has ever even come close to doing what these men did! And that is why I tell you that as far as the genuine Office of Apostle goes- that Office ceased to exist at the death of John. And that is true- not simply because I say so; and not because of some Man- made Logic. The Office of Apostle stopped with John's Death for the very same reason that Jesus sat down at the Right Hand of the Father- not because He was tired- but because He was finished! And the Office of the Apostle is no longer in force today- precisely because those men finished the Work that Jesus sent them to do!

And I say to you that the Office of Apostle is no longer in force on the earth- not because Brother Blair doesn't want a move of God in his Church; not because Brother Blair has come against the Holy Spirit; and not because Brother Blair doesn't want God to do what God has always done. None of that is true.

So, I say to you on the Authority of God's Word that the Ministry of the Apostles is over simply because they did their job! Those "sent ones" *finished* the great Work that Jesus assigned to them; and the New Covenant was articulated; and it was written down; and it was forever established on the earth! And the Church of Jesus Christ was raised up; And that one Church over which Jesus is the Head and for which Jesus shed His Blood shall never fall! And even the very Gates of Hades shall not prevail against Christ's Church! And the ministry of the

Apostles has ceased to exist because the superior Ministry of the New Covenant that is based on infinitely superior Promises and that was brought forth through the ministry of a sinless High Priest, Who offered an infinitely superior Sacrifice was forever established on the earth!

And what these men did can never be undone. And what they did can never be disannulled. And what they wrote will never be changed; or added to; or taken away from. And it shall remain in force and in fullness on the earth until Jesus bursts through the Eastern Sky on a white horse to rule and reign as King of all kings and Lord of all lords!

You see, once the very unique job that these very unique men did was actually done- it can never; and it will never be done again! Let me explain what I mean by that.

Once Christianity was established- it can never be established again. Now Christianity can certainly be preached; and it can be taught; and it can be believed on by millions; and it can and it should be spread all around the world. But once it was established that one time- by the Apostles- it can never be *established* again. That part of Christianity- the actual *development* of the Christian Faith was done one time - by the Apostles- and that part is over.

And if anyone for any reason adds anything to Christianity- then it changes and is no longer Christianity. Because the adding of that additional Information has changed it so that it becomes another religion.

What makes Christianity to be Christianity and not Islam or Buddhism or even Judaism is not the personalities of the various Leaders but in the actual Elements of what it teaches and what is true. So, if you change those Elements- you no longer have Christianity. And nobody on earth today has been called to change the Elements; or the Details of Christianity that the Apostles first laid down.

Those very precise Details have already been clearly defined for us; and written down in the pages of the New Testament. And so, we are not called to develop new Details; We are not called to receive new Information- or new Revelation. We have been called to earnestly contend for the Christian Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. We are called to preach and teach and proclaim and believe and love and obey and enjoy the already given Revelation that the Apostles received and wrote down for us.

Once the Gospel was defined as containing the various Details that it contains; once that Body of Instruction called, the "*Apostle's Teaching*" was developed and written down- it will never be developed and written down again. Nothing can ever be added to it and nothing can ever be taken away from the true Gospel- It is what the Apostles said it is.

Now we can certainly teach the Gospel; and we can believe it; and we can proclaim it throughout the entire world. And we should do that. But we can never actually *develop* the Gospel again. It has already been developed by the Apostles. So, since the Gospel has already been developed for us; and since it has already been articulated and recorded- it can never be altered or changed or redefined. And if anybody says that they are an Apostle today and they try to alter the Gospel with additional Information- then you no longer have the true biblical Gospel- you have a "different gospel". And that's why the Apostle Paul said this to the weak and vacillating Believers in **Galatians 1:6-9**:

**6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;**

**7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

**8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

**9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

So, I pray that you can understand just how *unique* and *special* and *narrow* the Ministry of the Apostles were. They were not just preachers sent out to proclaim the Gospel- they were sent out to *define* what the Gospel is and write it down.

So, the only reason why true genuine Apostles would need to exist today is if the Bible was incomplete and would need additional Information to be add to it. The Office of Apostle would be needed today if the Gospel was not complete; and there were particular Details of how unworthy Sinners are saved that we don't already have and need; or if Christianity itself was not already established on the earth.

But if that were true- then we should NOT send out Missionaries into the world- precisely because what they need to explain to the lost people of the world is still being received and is not yet completed!

But if the Bible HAS ALREADY BEEN completed; and if the Christian Church HAS ALREADY BEEN set up; and if Salvation HAS ALREADY BEEN defined; and if Christianity HAS ALREADY BEEN forever established- then there is no need for the Office of Apostles today- because that was the Job that Jesus first "drew them in" and then "sent them out" to do!

Now as I have told you before- I have *enormous* Respect for these men. As a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Elder/Pastor/Teacher- I am in awe of these men. And one of the main reasons I have such Respect for these men- is because if anyone, throughout



all of human History, *should have* failed in their Mission- it should have been these men. They operated under intense Scrutiny; as well as intense Pressure; all while under intense Persecution. And yet- they did NOT fail! They succeeded in a spectacular Way that, today- Christianity is the largest Religion in the world- and has a major Influence on every Continent on earth!

Now one of the *first* things they did was to write (or have written) the four Gospel Records that we have today:

1. Matthew
2. Mark
3. Luke
4. John

The Apostle Paul had his own personal medical doctor- Dr. Luke- a Gentile- write two books that we have in our New Testament today, the Gospel Record of the Life and Ministry of Jesus that bears his name (**Luke**) and the Diary of the first 30 years of the Christian Church- called, the “**Acts of the Apostles**”.

And, as I have told you before, there is some Evidence to suggest that the two Books that Dr. Luke wrote were used as Evidence at the Trial of Paul in Rome- which is why Dr. Luke was so meticulous in what he wrote.

And the Apostle Peter, who was probably illiterate his entire Life, had a man named, John Mark, write the Gospel Account that today bears his name rather than Peter’s.

The Apostle John wrote his Gospel Record much later than the other 3 as well as 3 Epistles and the Prophecy about the final glorification and Victory of the Lord Christ.

And one of the *first* Gospel Records that was written is the one we are going “verse-by-verse” through in our “journey through **Matthew**”. And this Record was first written in Hebrew and was written originally- not only TO the Jewish people; but it was also written IN a Jewish Manner- as a “Story” about the Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ- the Son of David and the Son of God.

We need to be reminded in our day of such amazing “Individualism”; such unparalleled “Equal Rights” and so much “Freedom” that after Jesus Christ Himself- these men did MORE and accomplished MORE than any group of men in the history of the world!

So, as I said before- this choosing of these particular men is so very vital and so very important- that I am going to "camp" here for a while- on this Passage- so that we can digest all that the Apostle is trying to tell us here. And what will help

us to understand what this former Tax- Collector wrote here is for us to look at what Dr. Luke wrote about the very same Event. So, let's look at **Luke 6: 12-16:**

**12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.**

**13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:**

**14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;**

**15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;**

**16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**

Now according to what Luke tells us here in verse 12- Jesus spent all night long in very intense and agonizing Prayer to pick the very men whom God had chosen from before the Foundation of the world to be the Apostles of Jesus Christ. So, this was NOT done haphazardly or even quickly- Jesus prayed all night long- agonizing and lingering and crying out to His Father over each man.

Now we all understand the word "Qualified." That's a word that's used an awful lot in our day- particularly in our Society which has set Standards and Qualifications for almost every Enterprise. Today there are Qualifications for Jobs; Qualifications for Schools; for certain Professions; for drivers' licenses; for credit cards; for loans; and on and on and on it goes.

So, we understand that people have to "qualify" or they have to "be qualified" or they have to "manifest certain Qualifications" if they hope to get certain things; or occupy certain Positions; or hold certain Jobs; or work in certain Professions in our Society.

And, usually, the higher paying jobs- *demand* and *expect* that a person qualify in the area of personality or character along with a proficiency of skill and education and experience along with self-motivation, social interaction, intelligence, stress management and many more Qualifications.

Nobody wants a novice to operate on their brain. Nobody wants a trainee to prepare their taxes. Nobody wants somebody who hasn't had the time or the inclination to study and prepare to defend them in court. We want people, who hold themselves out to be something, to actually *be* what they say they are; to be qualified to operate; to understand the tax law; to comprehend the legal angles; or to teach and counsel you about your immortal soul.

So, we have learned in Society that in order to do certain things- to do almost *anything* that is Valuable or Important- you need somebody who is

Qualified; somebody who has the Aptitude; the Skill; the Ability; and the Experience.

And that holds true in the spiritual Realm. The Bible is very clear that God's Standard for those who are responsible to carry on God's Work in the earth- those who lead in the House of God- the Pastors and the Teachers and the Evangelists and the Elders and the Deacons are extremely high. In fact- they are the *highest*; and the most *stringent*; and the most *involved*; of all the Professions on earth. Because what those who carry on the Work of the Lord do- is the most important thing of anything else- because it is eternal. So, let's look at what some of those Responsibilities and Qualifications are by turning to **1 Timothy 3:1-13**:

**1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.**

**2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,**

**3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.**

**4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity**

**5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),**

**6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.**

**7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

**8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,**

**9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.**

**10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.**

**11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.**

**12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.**

**13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.**

Now according to History- when God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle Paul to give these Qualifications for Deacons and Elders in the House of God to his son in the Faith, Timothy- 9/10 of the men of Ephesus were

DISQUALIFIED from holding one of these Offices. And it took years before the Church that Timothy pastored was able to set in qualified Deacons and Elders.

Now if you were starting a new Religion- wouldn't you want as many people as possible to join? And wouldn't you want as many people as possible to be in Leadership? Well, NOT if you were beginning Christianity. And NOT if a Leader being Qualified was MORE important than having none! And based on this- we can see that Christianity teaches that it is infinitely MORE important that the Leaders be Qualified than it is that you have any at all!

But WHY is that true? Why are the Standards so High? Why do the Standards purposefully leave out the Majority of men? To get the Answer, look at what the Apostle wrote in the next verse:

**15 ... I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.**

The Standards are so high because the Christian Church is the PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH! And that means that the Christian Church holds up the Truth and is its Support! And that means that Truth; biblical Truth; Divine; Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Truth is THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT COMMODITY ON EARTH! Without Truth- we have NOTHING! And with the Truth- we have EVERYTHING!

And the one single Place that God Almighty decided to deposit that Truth was IN the Church that Jesus is building; and the Church over which Jesus is Head! But now look at the next verse:

**16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.**

And so, another Reason that the Qualifications of a Leader in the Church is so high- is because the "Mystery of Godliness" is so great; and so Important; and so Powerful; and so Glorious! And so, those who "handle" that Mystery MUST be men, who are qualified and men who are sufficiently in awe of this great Mystery!

And that tells me that being a Pastor or Elder or a Teacher or a Deacon or an Evangelist in the House of God requires that the Gospel that we handle must ALWAYS illicit a high degree of Wonder; and Admiration; and Marvel! So, Leaders in the Church must be men, who wonder after God! Men, who are in awe of God. And men, who marvel at God! So, this is NOT a "Job" or simply a "Profession". Being a Leader in the Christian Church; and handling the Word of God- by preaching and teaching it- is a Divine Calling!

And so, the men, whose Calling it is to read; study; know; love; and teach and preach that Truth- MUST be men who are Qualified! Biblically Qualified! So, even though a man might have the correct Education; or even if a man operates and runs a very successful Business- if that man does NOT qualify according to biblical Standards- he CANNOT; and he MUST NOT lead in the Church!

It is from here and over in **Titus 1**- that we learn that someone, who wants to lead in the Church, must stand “head and shoulders” above those that he leads- in terms of personal Integrity; and biblical Morality; and the understanding of biblical Doctrine; and the Ability to articulate the Truth to the people.

The Bible says that ALL Leaders MUST be above Reproach. He MUST be a “one-woman man”; temperate; prudent; respectable; hospitable; able and qualified to teach; not addicted to wine or pugnacious. That Leader MUST be gentle; uncontentious; completely unimpressed with his own Abilities and Spirituality. He must be completely free from the Love of Money. He must manage his own Household well- keeping his children and all those who live “underneath his roof”- under control.

The man who leads must not be a “new convert” to the Faith- so that he won't get puffed up and become conceited with his new found Bible knowledge- and fall into the Condemnation incurred by the devil. And the man who leads *inside* the Church must have a good Reputation with those *outside* the Church- the Sinner and the Unbeliever- so that he doesn't fall into Reproach and the Snare of the devil.

**Hebrews 13:7** also says that all Leaders in the Church have to live *exemplary* Lives. Their Faith has to be the kind of Faith that the Congregation should WANT to copy. And ALL Leaders MUST give an Account to God for how they conduct themselves in their daily Lives.

Now in anyone's Book- these are very, very high Standards. And those are the Standards for ALL those who lead in the Church.

But then we MUST look at these Qualifications from another angle. So, let's look at the ultimate Qualification from **Matthew 5:48**, when Jesus said,

**Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

... and then we see that from this angle- NOBODY truly qualifies!

So, humanly speaking, NOBODY qualifies for ANYTHING in Christianity. NOBODY qualifies to be in God's Kingdom. NOBODY qualifies to be saved. NOBODY qualifies to be forgiven. NOBODY qualifies to be made Righteous. And NOBODY truly qualifies to lead in the Church and be in God's employ!

The sacred Scriptures are very clear that NOBODY on his own can meet the *least* of God's Standards. And that reality was written down by men, who themselves were NOT qualified! So, from that perspective- NOBODY is qualified to lead in the House of God!

Even after Paul had become an Apostle and was in the middle of his Ministry, he confessed in **Romans 7:18**:

**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...**

... and he said this in **1 Timothy 1:15**,

**"I'm the chief of sinners."**

So, in Reality- God has a huge Problem. There are NO qualified people that He can use- NONE! And so, an amazing Aspect of God's Grace is that He must sovereignly save Sinners; He must sovereignly sanctify Sinners; and then God must work His Ministry through the Unworthy and the Unqualified.

So, it is very encouraging to meet these Twelve men- because like all the rest of us- they are selected from the Unworthy and the Unqualified. They're like Elijah- that great OT Prophet. If you were to go to the Old Testament and look across the Peaks of all the godly men and Leaders and Prophets and Preachers, you might say that the highest Peak of all the Old Testament Peaks was Elijah- a great Man of God; and one who was mightily used by God! Yet the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem said this about this Prophet in **James 5:17**:

**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.**

**"Elijah was a man with a Nature like ours"** Really? This great Prophet had the SAME Nature that all men have? Elijah was **"JUST LIKE US"**? Elijah was just as fickle and unstable; and unqualified as we are? But if that was true- then even this man was NOT qualified to be what God had called him to be. So, how is it that God used him so greatly?

If God doesn't use Sinners- then He can't use *anyone*- precisely because we are ALL Sinners! If God doesn't use the Unqualified and the Unworthy- then He can't use *anyone*- precisely because we are ALL Unworthy and Unqualified. And that includes these twelve men that Jesus chose to be His Apostles.

So, the *first* thing I want you to understand about these amazing men- is that they were just like us. They had a Nature just like ours. These men were just men.

And as men- they were ALL Sinners- who were Unworthy to “be” and to “do” what Jesus called them to “be” and “do”. And in addition to being Unworthy- they were also Unqualified for the breathtaking Assignment that Jesus would give them. So, they were NOT Supermen. They were NOT perfect. They were NOT sinless. And they NEEDED God’s Grace. Because they were NOT any different from us.

So, what made these men Unique and Special and Important was NOT anything IN them. What made them to be “Apostles”- and what made them able to do what Jesus told them to do- was the Call of God on their Lives; and the *unique* Assignment that Jesus gave to them- that He never gave to anyone else! For example, please look at what the Apostle said in **1John 1:3**:

**what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

Now not a single human being on earth today could say what the Apostle said here. John was saying something here that ONLY the Apostles of Jesus- Jesus’ own personal Shahlia could say:

**“In order for you to be in ‘right Standing with God’- you MUST be in ‘right Standing with us (Apostles)”**

What? This is truly amazing! John was saying here that in order for *anyone* to be truly saved; and a part of the Kingdom of Heaven- those people MUST be in “Fellowship” with “us”- with the Apostles. In other words, for anyone to be “right” with God- they MUST agree with; and be striving to be obedient to- the Teachings (Doctrine) of the Apostles!

In other words, the TEST that each Believer must take- that will determine whether he is truly saved; and that will determine if he is going to be in Heaven one day- is that he is in Alignment with what the Apostles have written down in the New Testament!

Let me say this another Way. No one who is at odds with what the Apostles have written down; no one who is in Rebellion to what the Apostles have determined is Correct- is saved. No one, who refuses to agree with and who refuses to strive to obey what the Apostles have taught- is in “Right Standing” with God!

Now how can John say that? What gives John or any of the other Apostles the Ability and the Authority to say something like that? Look what he wrote,

**... and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

Here, John says, “*We Apostles are in a correct and proper ‘Fellowship’ with both God the Father and God the Son*” In other words, John was saying here that he and the other Apostles were in “Right Standing” with both God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ!

And since the Apostles have a correct and proper Fellowship with both God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ- if anyone desires to also be in “Right Standing” with God- they MUST be in Fellowship or they MUST be in accord with the Apostles and with what they teach!

Now only an Apostle could say this. No person in Church Leadership could make such a Statement today! But because these men “set the Standard”- they could say this. And this is just one Example of the unique Calling that was on these twelve men- even though- personally- they were all Sinners and were simply very Ordinary and Common men- called to a very Unique and Extraordinary Calling!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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