

"INTO ALL THE WORLD"

The Great Commission:
A Vindication and an Interpretation

by

Samuel M. Zwemer
Professor Emeritus of The History of Religion and Christian Missions,
Princeton Theological Seminary

Copyright @ 1943

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

CHAPTER TWELVE

APOSTOLIC QUALIFICATIONS

“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25-27).

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (II Timothy 2:1-4).

The word "**apostle**" is primarily used in the Gospels for the twelve disciples whom JESUS called, sent forth and on whom He conferred spiritual powers (Matthew 10:1).

He had many other disciples but chose these twelve after a long night of prayer (Luke 6:12).

They are distinguished from all the other followers of JESUS as a special group both in the Gospels and in the Acts.

Nevertheless, the eleven (after Judas fell away and went to his place) have other names added to their list, i.e., Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Matthias (Acts 1:20) and Paul (Romans 1:1); which raises the problem as to which of them takes the place of Judas. For, on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, John in his vision saw the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14).

Here, as in JESUS' choice of "the glorious band, the chosen few on whom the Spirit came," we have great diversity. (Revelation 21:19:

"The first foundation was jasper, the second," etc). so we would have:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Jasper – Peter | Beryl – Matthew |
| Sapphire – Andrew | Topaz – James, Son of Alphaeus |
| Chalcedony – James | Chrysoprasus – Lebbaeus or Thaddeus |
| Emerald – John | Jacinth – Simon the Canaanite |
| Sardonyx – Philip | Amethyst - Paul |
| Sardius – Bartholomew | |
| Chrysolyte - Thomas | |

Is it too fanciful to trace resemblances and study how stars differ from stars in glory?

It surely is not accidental that the twelve apostles with their diverse characteristics and talents were chosen as a typical group of the kind of men whom JESUS sent out to be His ambassadors.

They were chosen at the outset, and later on their successors were ordained, because of these diversities of gifts.

"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (I Corinthians 12:28).

If the number twelve is symbolical, as is generally agreed, then perhaps the order and grouping as given in the four lists in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts (Matthew 10:2-5; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13, 14) is also symbolical of the manifold ministry of the Church and its unity in diversity.

On the next page is a table based upon the agreement of these lists and an interpretation as given by Tholuck and Lange.

It is only suggestive of the multiform apostolic office and its variety of qualifications for the service of the Church of the New Testament, - and down through the ages.

**THE APOSTLES AS TYPES AND GROUPS
OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER**

“Foundation Stones” – Revelation 21:14

“He began to send them forth by two and two – Mark 6:7

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| S P I R I T U A L I T Y | <i>Order</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Work in Church</i> |
| | Peter And Andrew | Decision | “Rock” | Confession: “Thou are Christ” |
| | James And John | Devotedness Eloquence | “Manly” “Jacob” | Missions: “Findeth his brother” Martyrdom: “Brought to Jesus” (Greeks) Perhaps his eloquence was cause of death |
| | Philip And Bartholomew (Nathaniel) | Inquiry | “Lover of Horses” | Theology: Love, Light, Word (Last of Apostles) Communion: “Come and see” |
| | Thomas and Matthew | Prayer | “Gift of GOD” “Twin” John 11:16 | Sincerity: “No guile” Evidences: Place of doubt in Christianity |
| | James (the less) (Son of Alpheus) and Lebbaeus (Thaddaeus) | Doubt | “GOD’s Freeman” | Faith vs. Credulity Theocratic learning: “That it might be fulfilled” |
| | Simon (Zelotes) and Judas Iscariot | Relation of O.T. the Gospel Government | “Hearty” | Ecclesiastical order Acts – Epistle |
| | | Sentiment | “Zealot” | Discipline (see Epistles) Jude: Heresy Exposed Pastoral activity Zealous Church property Church Service The poor |
| | | Zeal | (Became a traitor) | |
| | | Business (Diaconate) | | |

When Judas betrayed his trust and left a vacancy in the noble band we read of the election of Matthias:

"Wherefore of these men which have companied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21, 22).

Of this event Keble, in *The Christian Year*, gives the following striking interpretation and also the qualifications of such a high office:

Who is GOD's chosen priest?
He who on CHRIST stands waiting day and night,
Who traced His holy steps, nor ever ceased,
From Jordan banks to Bethphage height:

Who hath learned lowliness
From his Lord's cradle, patience from His Cross;
Whom poor men's eyes and hearts consent to bless;
To whom, for CHRIST, the world is loss:

Who both in agony
Hath seen Him and in glory; and in both
Owned Him divine, and yielded, nothing loth,
Body and soul, to live and die,

In witness of his Lord,
In humble following of his Saviour dear:
This is the man to wield the unearthly sword,
Warring unharmed with sin and fear.

A careful study of CHRIST's training of the Twelve, such as we have by Dr. Bruce, will convince anyone that the apostles represent types of Christian service and special graces and talents which the Church Universal needs today. In any case, when JESUS sent them forth by two and two He emphasized the need of companionship in missions.

We have the same truth in Solomon's injunction (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12):

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up . . . And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

There is a famous sermon by Professor Robert E. Thompson on "The Sending of the Apostles Two by Two," which is so good that he himself confessed to having preached it one hundred and fifty-three times! [1]

On a certain occasion, we are told, a discussion arose in the China Inland Mission whether workers should be sent to distant provinces single or married, and Dr. Hudson Taylor said the question was settled by the Scripture text:

"One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

It seems that all the apostles and the early missionaries, save Paul and Barnabas, went on their journeys with their wives (I Corinthians 9:5).

CHRIST perhaps sent Peter with Andrew, and James with John, because they were brothers by birth as well as in spirit, but we do not have sufficient information to conjecture the cause why the other four pairs of apostles were linked in service.

At the outset they were to be witnesses to CHRIST's death and resurrection, that by the mouth of two such witnesses the truth of the Gospel might be vindicated (Matthew 18:16).

One is struck by the emphasis on the apostolic qualification of being an eyewitness of CHRIST's earthly ministry.

Mark, one of the first evangelists and a companion of Paul and Peter, tells us that the purpose which led to their choice was that they would be near Him, see His miracles and listen to His teaching. "**And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach**" (Mark 3:14).

And at the close of His ministry JESUS refers to this faithful companionship and promises reward (Luke 22:28, 29). They were all conscious of this primary qualification of intimate knowledge of the Messiah and of what He taught that they might bear witness to the world (Acts 10:39; 4:20; I John 1:1-3). (To know JESUS CHRIST by personal experience and at first hand is still a primary qualification).

JESUS was conscious of progress in His often slow-of-heart pupils or He would not have rejoiced in spirit publicly and called them blessed (Luke 10:21-24). So close was their fellowship that at the end JESUS said, "**Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you**" (John 15:15).

The first generation of Christians, the writers of the New Testament and all succeeding generations owe all to these eleven disciples of CHRIST, who in the days of His flesh continued with Him, observant, attentive, and undoubtedly making notes of their experiences.

Surely Matthew Levi did not leave his pen behind when CHRIST called him from the receipt of custom!

Furthermore, as regards their peculiar personal characteristics and talents we have not only, as noted, hints in the Gospel record, but artists have transferred their impression to the canvas.

An outstanding example is Hemand, the Swiss painter, whose *Le Samedi Saint* we have described in Chapter XI.

His companion picture of CHRIST offering the high-priestly prayer surrounded by the Eleven is a real character-study. One has only to mark the countenances of the disciples, during that solemn moment, to see diversities of gifts and the same spirit. There is no need of naming them.

Those who know their story can see it on their faces.

One may also find great wealth of interpretation of the lives of the Apostles in the hymnody of the Church, especially its Eastern Orthodox and Anglican branches, regarding -

A glorious band, the chosen few,
On whom the Spirit came:
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and flame.

They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel:
Who follows in their train?

Paul's Epistles answer that question, in a measure, for the first century. He speaks of those who were "**baptized for the dead**" and who hazarded their lives for the Lord JESUS. The basic qualifications of these elders, deacons, evangelists, prophets and teachers, many of whose names, beginning with Stephen, are found in the New Testament, we learn from Paul's three pastoral Epistles. Two of them were addressed to Timothy, a new missionary in the great city of Ephesus; the other to Titus in a most difficult pioneer field among Cretans, whose own poet, Epimenides, described them as "**liars, evil beasts, slow bellies**" (Titus 1:12).

Paul chose workers and ordained them. He also instructed others to ordain elders in every church. These spiritual leaders were called to "**the ministry of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.**" Therefore, we need not be surprised that Paul set before them high ideals.

- They were to be men of faith, of good conscience and were to live a life of prayer (I Timothy 1:19; 2:1-8).
- They were to be honorably married, of sober life, not loud nor lovers of money (I Timothy 3:1-3).
- They must have a good reputation in their home town and with their neighbors (II Timothy 3:9).
- They must be sound in doctrine but not dogmatic, ever reading and meditating so as to grow in knowledge (I Timothy 4:13-16).

Paul himself knew the Scriptures but was not a man of one book or of one idea. He repeatedly quotes from Greek literature. In prison he asked for a cloak against the cold but equally for books and parchments to warm his mind and soul (II Timothy 4:13-16). He tells Timothy to give attendance to reading. Covetousness is strongly condemned, for love of money kills love of souls. Nevertheless the young missionary must keep family accounts, support his children and only on this basis is he entitled to support by the church (I Timothy 5:8, 18). Paul himself worked with his own hands. To this he refers repeatedly.

He mentions again and again the necessary qualification of hospitality. This is largely a lost art in the West but in the Orient it is absolutely primary and essential (Titus 1:8, I Timothy 3:2). The evangelist must not be a faddist in unlearned and foolish questions or genealogies (II Timothy 2:23).

Curious information regarding the program of the Second Advent is not important when we preach to those who have not yet heard of the First Advent of our Saviour at Bethlehem!

The apostle Paul took care of his body, although he was ready to die daily. He traveled from Jerusalem to Illyricum evangelizing and planting churches, and yet sent for the cloak which he left at Troas, lest he take cold in the damp Mamertine prison of Rome. He was abstemious, and sacrificed everything to win CHRIST and preach Him crucified, and yet he told his helper, Timothy, **"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."**

When he suffered shipwreck and came on shore drenched, he did not sit down to hold a prayer-meeting and take rheumatism on cold Melita, but rushed about to kindle a fire, and gathered brushwood to make the blaze big. His was not only **"the spirit of love and power,"** but of a **"sound mind."**

The Son of Man was not an ascetic; He came eating and drinking. So did Paul, even in a shipwreck (Acts 27:33-34). The pioneer missionary need not be an ascetic to win his own self-respect or that of the people. He needs a sound mind in a sound body for his difficult task.

The task of the pioneer calls for prudence and common sense.

Some years ago, a party of American missionaries landed at Sierra Leone; two of their main principles were faith-healing and the Pentecostal gift of tongues; no medicines were to be taken, no grammars or dictionaries were to be used. The party was attacked by malignant fever; two died, refusing quinine. When the garrison surgeon called on the survivors, he found their minds fixed not to take medicine! Some twenty years ago an independent missionary, an earnest Christian, came to Arabia with similar views, and the idea of crossing the Arabian peninsula in the heat of summer, a chest of Bibles his only outfit; needless to say, he did not succeed.

The pioneer missionary today, however, as in Paul's time, should be free for the march and unencumbered for hard service.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

When we remember intrepid explorers like Lady Ann Blunt, Mrs. Theodore Bent and Isabella Bird Bishop, or heroic missionaries like Dr. Susie Rijnhart and Annie Taylor, in Tibet, or Mary Moffat, in Africa, it is evident that, in the task and the glory of the pioneer, women have their part. Nevertheless, single men, as a rule (although there have been noble exceptions), are better fitted for exploration and reconnaissance on the border marches.

As Rudyard Kipling puts it: "He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Above all qualifications Paul desired his helpers to be good soldiers willing to endure hardness. The prayer of Ignatius Loyola also came from a soldier's heart, one who had the large horizon of conquest:

Teach us, Good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will. Amen.

There is a long, long period of time from Paul to Ignatius Loyola and from him to our own day, but the essential missionary qualifications remain the same. Paul is still the one outstanding ideal missionary and we can never forget that he was distinguished not only for intellectual acumen but for spiritual insight, that his required qualifications for Timothy and Titus were first of all spiritual.

It would be interesting to compare these qualifications as given in his Epistles with the excellent "qualification blanks" provided by Foreign Boards for missionary candidates. The difference might be largely one of emphasis but do we always put the emphasis where Paul put it - spiritual men for spiritual work. We still need "**men full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**" more than any other kind.

Missionary Boards rightly emphasize the highest physical and intellectual qualifications for candidates for missionary work, but even more strongly insist that they be spiritually qualified.

Only spiritual men are a real acquisition and reinforcement in the conduct of a spiritual enterprise. Unless the missionary's first love is his love for CHRIST crucified and exalted, he will lose it, grow lukewarm and finally cold, when surrounded by the atmosphere of heathenism.

The real missionary spirit is the Holy Spirit.

He Himself gave us the message in the Scriptures, and in the CHRIST enables us to interpret it to others. Not until a man's life has been transformed by the power of the message he goes to proclaim is he ready to endure the hardship and to be patient under the adversity which is sure to be his experience as a missionary. He must know that the Christian faith is a reality; that his faith is the "**substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**" He believes that GOD has worked miracles in the past and can work miracles today. He knows that Christianity in its origin, history and effect is from first to last supernatural.

The man who denies its supernatural character cannot be a true missionary of the CHRIST, even though he go to the mission field. The missionary spirit will not abide without the missionary message. The giants in faith have been the giants in faithfulness.

A man who has mere opinions and no convictions wrought out in his own life's experience as regards the CHRIST is a man without a message.

The man who expects to go out and represent Christianity in the non-Christian world must carry with him the consciousness of the power of CHRIST enabling him hour by hour to live the victorious life. It is the one indispensable part of the missionary's outfit and the one that convinces the other man of the truth of the Message.

A missionary is not only one who is sent but one who is sent with a message.

The true missionary must not only have a message, but he must be the living embodiment of that message and the incarnation of the truth which he teaches. Like an ambassador at a foreign court, he must not only carry credentials from his own government but he must be loyal to that government and represent its ideals and ideas to those to whom he goes. The knowledge and experience of this truth make the missionary. He stands as a witness to the truth which he possesses, and proclaims it by his life as well as by his lips.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Robert E. Speer, *The Finality of JESUS CHRIST*, p. 11.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
