

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

David's policy. He spared the heathen population. We are not told that he destroyed their sanctuary, or forbade the continuance of their worship. He certainly did not substitute the Ark for the image and symbol of whatever god had occupied that sanctuary before. The Ark was placed beneath a tent. But whatever may have happened to the Jebusite sanctuary, it is clear that a considerable heathen population, and all the attractions which a god in ancient possession of a definite territory has always had for the invaders of the latter, remained in Jerusalem side by side with the Israelite worship of Jahweh. If we are to understand the subsequent history of religion in Jerusalem, we must, with Ezekiel, keep in mind this native heathen strain. *Thine origin*, he tells her when exposing her affection for debased rites, *thine origin and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite.*¹

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

STUDIES IN THE "INNER LIFE" OF JESUS.

XI.

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF THE TWELVE.

1. THE public ministry in Galilee, according to Matthew and Mark, began with the call of four disciples, Simon and Andrew, James and John. Luke, after recording a preaching tour through Galilee, reports the call of Peter, following on a miraculous draught of fishes. There seems to be little doubt that Luke's account is less trustworthy than Matthew's and Mark's. The visit to Nazareth is placed at the beginning of the ministry, although it belonged to a later date, as it serves as a programme of the work of Jesus, as

¹ Ezek. xvi. 3.

the Evangelist conceived it. And the story of the miraculous draught of fishes is probably a varying tradition of the same incident as is reported by John in connexion with one of the appearances after the Resurrection, and as prior to, and preparatory for Peter's restoration to his apostleship after his denial, an occasion on which his confession. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8), would be very much more appropriate than it is in the connexion which Luke gives to it.

2. The relation which this call of four disciples at the Sea of Galilee has to the interview between probably all of them and Jesus at the Jordan, as reported in the Fourth Gospel (i. 35-51), has been indicated in a previous *Study* (vi. The Early-Self-Disclosure). The first meeting was the beginning of friendship, and the companionship then begun did not last long, as the disciples soon returned to their homes and callings. At the second meeting the call to surrender all and to follow Him always was given. The promptness and completeness of the obedience to this call becomes more intelligible if already there was, not only acquaintanceship, but also an attachment more or less close to His person, through faith in His mission. Two questions may in this connexion be asked, although they cannot with any certainty be answered. Why did these disciples leave Jesus at all? Why were they at this time called to constant companionship? With reference to the first question two possible answers suggest themselves: Jesus may have sent them away, or they may have left Him. After His discovery of the unpreparedness of the nation as a whole to receive Him, He may have desired to withdraw for a time into solitude and silence to wait the clearer indications of His Father's will, and He may Himself have disbanded the small company. Or, as has already been suggested, the enthusiasm with which He at first inspired His disciples may have given place to disappointment and distrust, when

He did not fulfil their anticipations of the Messiah, and the people did not realize their expectations in receiving Him. Thus, they may have left Him of their own accord, and He may have suffered them to go, in the assurance that they would not be able to cast off the influence He had won over them, and in due time would be ready to return to their allegiance to Him.

3. Jesus' position accounts for the call He at this time addressed to them. Luke reports that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (iv. 14). Although he connects this spiritual exaltation directly with the victory over temptation gained in the wilderness, and although the acceptance of John's record as historical compels us to place between the two events thus closely connected the *Early Ministry*, yet we may take these words as a suggestion that the distrust of the motives of the people in attaching themselves to Him, which His rebuke of the request of the nobleman from Capernaum betrays (John iv. 48), had again, through communion with His Father, yielded to confidence in His mission. His intense desire to fulfil His vocation had been revived, but events had taught Him that the method of His work must be more adapted to the state of unpreparedness of all classes of the nation, which, as a whole, could not respond to His appeal or recognize His authority. It was, therefore, necessary, while continuing the public ministry with greater reserve and restraint of utterance and action, to exercise on chosen individuals a more private influence, in which greater freedom and boldness of self-discovery would continue possible. Even as Isaiah turned from the king and people to the small *remnant*, among whom as disciples he bound up the testimony, and sealed the law (viii. 16), so Jesus chose a small company to receive "the mystery of the kingdom."

4. The words, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark i. 17), indicate the pur-

pose of the call. These disciples were intended not only to believe in Him themselves, but so to witness and work for Him as to win others for the same faith. If, as has been maintained in a previous *Study* (iv. The Vocation Accepted) Jesus knew that His calling involved His sacrifice, then He was now taking steps for the continuance of His mission, and the extension of His message after His own work on earth was ended. His method was by personal intercourse to exercise so transforming an influence over His disciples, that they in turn would be able to exercise as transforming an influence over others. He was confident that by the simple means of daily companionship He could not only so develop their faith in Him that they would become altogether His for the ends of His ministry, but also so change them in their characters and capacities that through them others could be brought into the same relation to Himself. If we consider on the one hand how ignorant and imperfect these men were, and on the other how profound in wisdom and sublime in excellence the ideal to be realized in them and in others through them, we cannot but marvel at His confidence in the influence which by His companionship He hoped to wield.

5. What effect His companionship had at the beginning of the ministry is suggested by the comparison which He makes between the relation of His disciples to Himself and the relation of the friends to the bridegroom (Mark ii. 19, 20), a comparison which served at the same time to indicate the contrast between their mood and that of the Baptist's disciples, as well as to suggest the change which their feelings would in the future undergo. As Jesus did anticipate that through sacrifice He would fulfil His vocation, there is no good reason for suspecting the genuineness of this veiled reference to future separation from His disciples. But, as He looked forward to sacrifice as the means of salvation, until the Cross came into closer view, and began to

cast its drear shadow even over His soul, "the joy that was set before Him" inspired confidence and courage. This anticipation of separation from His disciples did not interfere with His experience of satisfaction in their companionship. They, without any such insight or foresight as He had, lived in the present moment, and that for them was joy, so that any fasting would have been a hypocrisy. The first lesson the disciples learned in the school of Jesus was to rejoice in His companionship, for it brought them assurance of God's love, enlightenment in His truth, and the experience of His salvation. At first they learned, not what faith might cost, but what it could win.

6. Not only did Jesus share in their satisfaction; it was His joy of which they had caught the contagion. It was His meat and drink to do His Father's will, and in the doing of it He gained greater joy because He had for His companions those whom He was training for the same delight. The separation from His kindred which the fulfilment of His vocation involved was doubtless a great trial to Him, but He found consolation and compensation for the loss in their companionship. "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark iii. 34, 35). Had He been indifferent to the love of His kindred, these words might mean very little, but so tender a heart as His we may be sure felt the love of home deeply and keenly. A genuine and intense affection bound Him to His disciples as to His family. May we not even conjecture that, apart from the purpose for which He had called His disciples, He himself needed and yearned for close companionship and intimate intercourse. The love for mankind which was prepared for sacrifice on man's behalf craved the satisfaction which the love of men could give; and this was found in the disciples.

7. For what ends did Jesus use this love for, and joy in,

Himself? The essential condition of discipleship was faith in Him, and in God through Him. By faith He did not mean assent to His claims, for at first He did not put forward His claims, but self-committal to Him personally, involving confidence in, and submission to, God. They were to trust Him and God in Him as unquestioningly and unhesitatingly as they were to obey unreservedly and completely. The extent of the faith required is shown in a very striking way in two incidents, which, it must be confessed, are not without serious difficulty for all who cannot accept without doubt or question the supernatural aspects of the life and work of Jesus, *the stilling of the storm* (Mark iv. 35-41), and *the walking on the waters* (vi. 45-52). Without now discussing the distinction of which so much has been made by recent criticism, between the *healing* and the *nature* miracles, let us consider Jesus' utterances on both occasions, that we may discover the indication of a purpose so necessary to and congruous with the fulfilment by Him of His vocation as to make more intelligible and credible the miraculous display of Divine power involved. After the storm ceased, He reproachfully asked the disciples the question, "Why are ye fearful, have ye not yet faith?" (Mark iv. 40). When approaching the disciples on the waters He allayed their terror with the assurance, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (vi. 50). Both utterances teach the faith which inspires confidence and courage. The disciples were being trained for a work, the dangers, difficulties, and disappointments of which would be so many and great, that only an invincible and triumphant constancy of faith could carry them through. By faith they must remove mountains and cast them into the midst of the sea; they must attempt and achieve the humanly impossible; they must never falter in their belief that God can do all things. How were they to be taught this lesson? Would words, how-

ever eloquent, be sufficient? Are not deeds more persuasive than words? When the storm was changed to calm they learned that with Jesus they were in God's hand, and that He could and would do all that was needful for their safety. When Jesus came to them on the waters they learned that His Presence and protection would ever be with them, as though they might be forgetful of Him, He would never forget them. If we realize that the establishment and extension of God's kingdom depended on the faith of these men, and that the faith which in their circumstances they needed was an absolute faith in God's omnipresent care, omniscient wisdom, and omnipotent might, the difficulty in believing even such miracles may be removed. Unless we reduce the healing miracles to simple instances of *faith-cures*, and so deny that they are in any sense miraculous acts of supernatural power, it does not seem more easy to conceive the exercise in such acts of such power in healing human disease than in controlling nature's forces. If the kingdom of God is that for which nature exists, it is not credulity but reason to admit that the laws of nature must be subordinate to the ends of the kingdom. If it should be argued that the faith of the disciples should have been developed in other ways and by other means than by miracles, then it might be replied that we do not know and cannot judge all that was necessary to make these men, sinful, feeble, fearful, all that for their work they needed to become. It is more fitting that we should trust the wisdom and skill of Jesus to use always the best means to foster in them a faith of the same kind and in the same degree as His own, so far as their human limitations allowed.

8. The disciples were being trained in this personal attitude to Jesus, and God in Him, that they might be fit to receive instruction in the mystery of the kingdom, which to the multitude was given in parables (Mark iv. 11). But

theirs was no unjust favour, for the parable of the *Sower* showed that they had proved good soil into which the seed of the Gospel might be cast (Matt. xiii. 23). On their receptivity depended His communicativeness. He explained to them the character, conditions, and destiny of the kingdom in plain words, while He secured the attention and stimulated the curiosity of the multitude by figurative speech. We must not assume, however, that if any anxious inquirer, any interested hearer, had come for the same interpretation it would have been denied. Not for mere concealment did He speak in parables, but that He might on the one hand avoid the misunderstanding His literal language would have produced owing to the unpreparedness of most of His hearers, and on the other arouse the interest of those who were capable of further instruction. It is impossible to believe that, as the quotations from Isaiah (Matt. xiii. 14, 15) suggest, it was His intention to hide the truth from the multitude for their ruin, although the result of His teaching was that many went away hardened. To secure the attention and interest of His disciples, He further impressed on them the value of His teaching by telling them that theirs now was the blessedness long desired by saints, seers, and sages of past times, who had looked forward to the revelation being made to them (Matt. xiii. 16, 17). He was eager to awaken their desire for His instruction, for it depended on their intelligence whether the mystery of the kingdom now revealed to them alone would at the appointed time be effectively made manifest to the world (Mark iv. 22). They must listen not as learners only, but as teachers. Each of them was a disciple that he might become a scribe of the kingdom. But even as He Himself did not teach as the Jewish scribes, who repeated by rote the opinions they had been taught, He desired His disciples to be "like a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new

and old" (Matt. xiii. 52). While dependent on Him they were nevertheless to possess liberty to develop and apply His teaching as the new conditions might require. To guide and guard that liberty there was afterward given to them the Spirit of truth, who continued in interpreting the revelation of Jesus.

9. The firstfruits of the harvest of which He had been sowing the seed in the good soil of the minds of His disciples was reaped by Him at Cæsarea Philippi, when Peter, for the other disciples as well as himself, confessed Him the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Many find in this incident one of the strongest arguments against the trustworthiness of John's Gospel. They maintain justly that Mark represents Jesus as exercising a strict reserve about His claims, as allowing His disciples entirely from His words and works gradually for themselves to reach the conviction of His Messiahship, as accepting for the first time with grateful surprise this confession at the mouth of Peter. With this representation, which has undoubtedly psychological probability in its favour, they further maintain John's account of the first interview of the disciples with Jesus is absolutely inconsistent. We must frankly on the one hand admit that possibly the Evangelist makes the confession of Andrew to his brother Simon, of Philip to Nathanael, and of Nathanael to Jesus Himself much more definite than was their language at the time. On the other hand we may with probability maintain, that if Jesus did not expressly claim the Messiahship, yet He did speak less reservedly about His aims and hopes than afterwards, and that for a time at least His holy enthusiasm did inspire the Baptist and his disciples with faith in His mission. It seems improbable that the four called at the Sea of Galilee should respond so promptly to the call, unless they had been previously influenced. It is probable that they had been prepared for Jesus' influence by the Baptist's teaching. It is

improbable that the two first disciples would leave John for Jesus without some adequate reason. How much Jesus did at first reveal we cannot confidently conjecture. But it was possibly just enough to arouse and keep up their attachment to Him, but not enough to relieve them of the task of discovering, as they did, for themselves how completely the prophecy of the Messiah was fulfilled in Him. An analogy may here help us. A young convert in the enthusiasm of a revival movement is carried far above and beyond the range of his experience, and it is only by a slow and it may be painful discipline and development afterwards that he actually incorporates in his experience the truth which he confessed at the beginning. Whatever expectations these disciples cherished at first there was as much to contradict as to confirm them in the ministry of Jesus. Even if they at the beginning confessed Him Messiah, on the Baptist's and His own testimony, in a moment of spiritual exaltation, yet since He proved so different from the Messiah they desired and expected their faith could be maintained and completed only by a slow growth in mind and heart under His instruction and influence. This education of their faith needed to be continued after their confession at Cæsarea Philippi. May not Jesus be referring to the difference of the belief in testimony and the faith of experience in the words, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17). If we inquire how the revelation of the Father came to Peter, the words of Jesus give the answer, "No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (xi. 27). It was through the Son that the Father's knowledge of the Son had come. The training and teaching of Jesus had been the means of the experience in which God revealed the truth which Peter had confessed.

10. This confession was of utmost importance to Jesus for two reasons. Therein a beginning was made of the Christian community, the people of the Messiah, who would bear witness to and do work for Him in the world. As the first members of the Christian Church in virtue of their confession as the result of their discipleship, Peter and those for whom he spoke are described as the rock on which the church would be built. No privilege peculiar to Peter, or transmissible by him alone, was by these words conferred. There was simply indicated the function of the disciples as apostles after the Resurrection, when by their testimony and influence the congregation of believers with them in the Christ was firmly established and widely extended. The confidence of Jesus in the constancy and sincerity of the faith of the disciples is most strikingly shown in this prophecy of a community, that no power even from the Unseen could dissolve, neither His own death nor the deaths of these disciples. Another reason for Jesus' satisfaction in this confession was, that He could now lay aside His reserve not only as regards His Messiahship, but also as regards the sacrifice to which He knew Himself called. The faith of the disciples, which had been so far assured, was at once put to a severe test. By His words and works hitherto Jesus knew that He had tried their faith, that they might have found "occasion of stumbling," as John the Baptist had found; but now He was about to make a much severer demand on their fidelity. For while a Messiah who went about doing good and preaching the Gospel to the poor was not altogether incredible, a Messiah who chose to die strained faith to breaking point. He had allowed them to discover His Messiahship without explicit declarations, but to secure their acceptance of His ideal of a Saviour through self-sacrifice, frequent and urgent persuasion was necessary, especially as His most solemn and sacred words fell on incredulous minds and unsympathetic hearts. Previously

the disciples had grieved Him by their lack of understanding." "Are ye also even yet without understanding?" (Matt. xv. 16). "Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember?" (xvi. 9). But now He was to discover a settled unbelief and a fixed resolve against His purpose. They could not and would not believe His words about the death to which He was unfalteringly advancing. We may be sure He said more to them than what we find in the meagre announcements of the Passion which the Gospels contain. They did not report because they did not remember, and they did not remember because they were not only indifferent but even hostile to His purpose. His vehement rebuke of Peter's remonstrance, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. xvi. 23), is a vivid flash of light on the shadows which to so large an extent fall on the relation of Jesus and His disciples. Hitherto His temptations had come to Him from the multitudes desiring to use Him only as a Healer, or to make Him king that He might continue freely feeding them, or from the scribes and priests who wanted Him to work a sign to prove His claims. But now these came from His chosen companions who wanted Him to spare Himself and them by refusing the cup which the Father was giving to Him. Temptations so coming were much more dangerous, for the more intimate the relation and the more intense the affection, the greater the power for evil or for good. The Transfiguration, the significance of which must be dealt with in a future *Study*, was probably intended not only to confirm the resolution of Jesus Himself, but also to remove one of the most painful and dangerous hindrances to His maintaining His steadfastness, by not only overcoming the opposition to, but even by winning the sympathy with, His sacrifice of the inner circle of disciples, whose attitude most keenly and strongly affected Jesus Himself.

11. We may here turn aside a moment to consider a most interesting question which the Gospel record suggests. Did Jesus in His disappointment with His chosen disciples sometimes long for more intelligent learners and followers? Were His disciples the "babes" whom He contrasted with "the wise and understanding," and did He, in His gracious invitation to the labouring and heavy laden (Matt. xi. 28-29) think of and yearn for another class of disciples, who would prize His gift more highly because they had felt their need more keenly? It is not at all improbable. Had He been able to secure a disciple like Paul, surely the loneliness He felt in view of the Cross would have been relieved by at least one companion, who allied insight with love. In this connexion Jesus' relation with Mary of Bethany seems to gain fresh significance. The "one thing needful" for Him, which she had chosen, "the good part" of bestowing (Luke x. 42), was sympathy. He found in her a ready and eager listener, as He spake of what was dearest to His heart. The anointing for His burial which she bestowed upon Him a few days before the Passion, of which her lavish, precious gift was the token (Mark xiv. 6-9), was the love which approved while it mourned His sacrifice. Thus not improbably Jesus found without what He vainly sought within the disciple-circle.

12. To return, however, to the training of the Twelve, not only by repeating from time to time the announcement of His passion did He seek to overcome their opposition and to win their submission to His will; His teaching on the duties of discipleship now assumed a more tragic note. There can be little doubt that, owing to the grouping of similar material, irrespective of order in time, by the Evangelists, especially Matthew, much teaching about the sufferings of the disciples in consequence of their confession of Him is given before the incident at Cæsarea Philippi, which obviously belongs to a later period. To refer to only one

passage, the teaching in Matthew x. 16-39, with the exception of a sentence or two here and there, is quite inappropriate as counsel given to the disciples on their first mission in Galilee. It is not at all credible that He should warn them that fidelity to Him would bring extreme suffering on them before He had announced that He Himself would so suffer. His call to fidelity, His prophecy of the persecution to which fidelity would expose them, His warning of the eternal loss which lack of fidelity would involve, His promise of the eternal gain fidelity would bring—all these elements in His teaching we can confidently assign to the period when He was striving to prepare His disciples for His passion. By thus laying down the law of sacrifice for all subjects of the kingdom, He was endeavouring to reconcile them to the expectation of His own Passion. His aim was to convince that it was good that He should suffer, and that they should suffer with Him. To the same period we must assign the interviews of Jesus with three candidates for discipleship (Luke ix. 57-62). There must be on the part of all His followers absolute self-sacrifice that they might be partners with Him in His sacrifice. Ease and comfort, home and kindred must once for all be surrendered in devotion to Him. Need we wonder at the severity of the demands, if we remember the position of peril in which He then found Himself, and the pain and trouble which the divided affections and faltering allegiance of the Twelve were causing Him? This same explanation is applicable to the case of the rich young ruler. In view of the Cross He could accept no disciples who were not prepared to forsake all for Him and to endure anything with Him. What He in any case would have suffered in anticipation of the Cross was increased by the loneliness in which His disciples left Him to endure. They who had rejoiced with Him would not mourn with Him. Again and again did they grieve Him with clear proofs of their estrangement from Him, of their

indulgence of tempers and passions opposed to His spirit and purpose.

13. Let us briefly glance at the story of Jesus' dealing with His disciples during this period. Their rivalry with the discord and division caused by it was exposed, and humility was taught by the example of the child in the midst (Matt. xviii. 2-3). They all had need to turn and become as little children even to find entrance into the kingdom, not to speak of places of rank and power in it. Their arrogance in forbidding the man who was casting out devils in the name of Jesus, when confessed by John, was rebuked by a declaration that they had no exclusive monopoly in the use of that name (Mark ix. 38-40). James and John grieved His heart by seeking to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritan village which would not receive them (Luke ix. 54-56). When Peter desired to know the reward which they would get for their abandonment of home and calling, Jesus, while assuring him that every sacrifice would be rewarded abundantly, warned him, that the first might prove last, and the last first (Matt. xix. 30), for by his spirit he was showing that he might lapse from the position he held. The sons of Zebedee were refused their request for an exceptional favour, and the indignation of the other disciples against them gave Jesus the occasion for contrasting with their spirit His own. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The inevitable result of their distrust and disobedience was the failure of their fidelity when the test came. In Judas hostility and disgust ended in treachery. In Peter foolish boastfulness, in spite of tender, earnest warnings, gave place to cowardly denial. When Jesus was arrested, all forsook Him and fled. John, it is true, was in the Judgment-Hall and at the Cross, but in the hour of the power of darkness, in the agony and desolation of the Cross, the

companions whom He had chosen and called, taught and trained, held aloof, and gave Him no help or comfort. Was not His burden made heavier, and His shadow darker, and His loneliness drearier by this failure and desertion? Not the fickle multitude alone, not only the Jewish authorities in their hate, and the Roman soldiers in their cruelty, had a share in the crime and tragedy of the Cross. Even the disciples increased the agony and desolation of the great sacrifice. And yet, although the faith of the disciples seemed to be done to death on the Cross, even as the Crucified was raised from the dead, it, too, attained a resurrection. Weak, foolish, and wilful, as these men were, the instruction and influence of Jesus had not been vain. His love and grace held them fast, and so their trust and loyalty revived. His appearances to them after the Resurrection saved them from despair, inspired them with confidence and courage. The certainty that He still lived filled them with that holy enthusiasm, of which Pentecost was but the first manifestation, which continued to be the most prominent characteristic of the Church in the Apostolic Age. In His disciples Jesus saw the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.

ALFRED E. GARVIE.